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“FEDIA”

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS, FOUR SCENES, FROM MODERN LIFE IN
NEW YORK

By ALEX. B. EBIN

*Author of “Arbitration,” “Roosevelt,” “Portia in Politics,”
“Marriageables,” “The Compromising Photo,” Etc.*

Based in Part on Tolstoy's Tragedy “THE LIVING CORPSE”

EUROPE'S SENSATIONAL PLAY OF 1912

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

FEDIA PROTOsov.....	A Russian Noble, living in New York
LIZA.....	His Wife, living in New York
SASHA.....	Liza's Sister, living in New York
VICTOR KARENIN.....	A friend of the family
COUNT ABREZKOV.....	A friend of both families
MASHA.....	A young chorus girl
ALEXANDROVE.....	An intellectual tramp
BERNS.....	A Secret Service man
KOROTKOFF } STAHOFF }	Fedia's friends

The Judge, Clerk of the Court, District Attorney, Usher and Secretary; a Coroner, Police, Spectators, Chorus Girls and Jury of Twelve.

FIRST ACT.

A high class Café in the New York Tenderloin.

SECOND ACT.

Fedia Protosov's poor lodgings.

Both scenes of this Act take place in the same room.
The Curtain is dropped for a moment to indicate the passing
of time.

THIRD ACT.

Ten years later. The Court House, New York City.

TIME: The present, Place, New York.

NOTICE: Nearly all the minor characters can easily be doubled. The stage hands and musicians to constitute the jury.



“FEDIA”

ACT I.

Palm Garden in a high-class Tenderloin Cafe.
Flowers, palms and brilliant lights.

Two exits, upper and lower entrance on the right and one only upper entrance on the left.

In the background C., at the extreme end, a cosy couch, surrounded by Oriental tapestries.

At both sides, right and left of the stage, raised platform with drinking tables for visitors.

Electric light bulbs on the palm trees between the tables.

At the extreme end of stage, nearest audience on the left is Fedia's table, chairs near it [C. & L.]

In pails of ice on the floor wines in variety. The table contains but the wine in use at the moment, and two kinds of glasses, four in all.

The table is empty as the Curtain rises, but the chairs are bent over to show that it is occupied.

At the small tables visitors, men and women, in evening dress, and high spirits, most of the men are intoxicated. Songs behind the scenes before the Curtain rises.

The centre of stage is kept free for the dancers. On a small table nearest audience on the right are seated Count Abrezkov and Sasha. Both of them are in their out of door clothes; Sasha is deeply veiled, but her figure shows up to advantage under her closely fitted coat.

Count Abrezkov is a bachelor of 60. An old nobleman, distinguished appearance and lofty superiority; tall soldierly looking, plenty of skylight on his head.

Both of them are eagerly and nervously watching in the direction of the entrances, the faces of new arrivals, when the music stops, Sasha breaks the silence.

SASHA [Nervously]. Can I be recognized under this heavy veil?

ABREZKOV [Eying her closely]. No, not you, but I am completely compromised. Just consider my predicament.

SASHA [Nervously]. You can explain.

ABREZKOV [Harshly]. I can explain nothing, and it is all for nothing... Between Fedia and his wife, your sister, all is over.

SASHA [Protestingly]. I hope not, I am sure not.

ABREZKOV [Sharply]. He has written her very plainly that he will never return...

SASHA [Snapping her fingers]. He has written her many things...Fedia has but one failing—he drinks—in all other respects he is a brilliant man.

ABREZKOV [Hurt]. Brilliant is the word...[Waving his hand]. You want your mother and sister to wait until he has done away with everything, and introduced these chorus girls into his home?

SASHA [Pleadingly]. He has none.

ABREZKOV [Pointedly]. Possibly, possibly, none in particular. He may fool you, but I know him and he knows it.

SASHA [Airily]. Liza will forgive him, to err is human, to forgive, divine.

ABREZKOV [I hope for the best, but if your sister were my daughter, I would make her leave him long ago.

SASHA. How easily you say it.

ABREZKOV [Plaintively]. No, it is not easy...It is not easy to see a friend divorced, but it is better than to ruin her whole young life...If only, if only he gave her a divorce. She is young, she may still be happy, her entire life is before her.

SASHA [Emphatically]. Liza can't love another.

ABREZKOV [Earnestly]. Why not, once free there are many good men who would jump at the chance.

SASHA. It isn't fair, I know you are thinking of Karenin.

ABREZKOV [Sharply]. Exactly...They have known each other since childhood, and [emphatically] she loves him.

SASHA [Protestingly]. A platonic friendship...at its best.

ABREZKOV [Knowingly]. Only give them the chance.

SASHA [Complainingly]. All the more reason why mother should not have invited Karenin into the house...I heard her telephoning and my blood boiled!...

ABREZKOV [Soothingly]. My regret is that she has not done it sooner...Between Fedia and Liza all is ended, their married life has been doomed long ago.

SASHA [With passion]. You are a pessimist, I hate pessimists!...

ABREZKOV [Persuasively]. Believe me, he will not return...He could not after all this racket and high jinks. He took an oath in my presence and that of your mother that if

and when he goes on a spree again, he will deprive himself of all his rights as a husband, and give her full liberty.

SASHA. What liberty can she have while married?

ABREZKOV [Emphatically]. He promised a divorce and we will insist...He is a brute while drunk, and is past redemption, a divorce is the only logical thing!...

SASHA [Critically]. A divorce, indeed...A divorce with its terrible ordeal—the army of lawyers and mud throwers, the lies, falsehoods, abominations and notoriety which such a procedure necessitates!...

ABREZKOV. Divorce is unpleasant, but it has its redeeming qualities. I will not lift my little finger to bring Fedia back. It is not practical to try and mend your china when it's cracked as much as Fedia,—a man swallowing his death in tumblers on the instalment plan.

SASHA. When a woman has made her bed, she must lie in it. Liza and Fedia have entered into a contract, divine or not, it binds them. [Pause] Fedia drinks on account of business troubles, he should be given another chance.

ABREZKOV. He deserves nothing but wholesale contempt. I am not analyzing the cause of his drinking, I content myself with facts, with things as they are and as they ought to be. [Snapping his fingers]. I will not allow this drunkard, this degenerate, to rob your sister of her life's happiness.

SASHA [Pleadingly]. Liza should wear her cross for the sake of social duty.

Fedia is a nice man... [Eying him with compressed lips]:

ABREZKOV [Vigorously]. Too bad he doesn't know it...Your sister should not be made to live an unhappy life for the sake of setting an example to a world that abhors it!...

[Pleadingly]. Karenin and Liza love each other, and life stretches out long and wide before them. Come let us go home. [Makes a movement].

SASHA [Who is in love with Karenin, but wouldn't openly admit it].

You don't know how your expressions cut through me like a knife.

I am grateful to you for accompanying me, but if this is your frame of mind, I will see him alone. [Both exit].

[Enter Stahoff and Korotkoff in ruffled clothes. Both men are intoxicated, their faces flushed, steadyng them-

selves on their feet, supporting each other from time to time as they speak].

KOROTKOFF [Laughing heartily, almost hysterically. Supporting himself on his companion].

Fedia has been telling me one of his funny stories. Ha, ha, ha! There is so much humor in it. Smash my topper, I can't help laughing!...[Laughing convulsively].

STAHOFF [Joining in the laugh drunkenly]. Tell it to me [nudging him] come on! Damn me!...

KOROTKOFF [Waving him off]. No, I can't repeat, and you wouldn't appreciate it,...You are altogether too sober!...

STAHOFF [Drunkenly]. What's the odds!...Try me, just try me! [Pause]. It's not chummy, damn me!...

KOROTKOFF [Drunkenly]. His uncle sent him two thousand dollars to pay taxes and interest on his estate, and what do you think? His first impulse actually was to pay it!...

STAHOFF [Drunkenly]. Fedia is a cross breed, his first impulse usually is to do the wrong thing, I've noticed it lots of times, damn me!...

KOROTKOFF [Laughing]. But what is the use paying bills, says Fedia, when everything is mortgaged to the full, anyway? Smash my topper!

STAHOFF [Drunkenly]. Paying bills is an old-fashioned idea. I know it without Fedia...I am a real thoroughbred, I am, damin me!...

KOROTKOFF. I'll put the bills away, said Fedia, where no one could see them, and...I will feel as though they had been paid. He took the bit into his mouth, bolted like blazes ...and...came here!...

STAHOFF [Laughing]. And yet his mother-in-law calls him a degenerate...His affairs are in bad shape and no wonder—money melts under his fingers!...

KOROTKOFF [Reflectively]. Considering the amount of final bottles we drank together, you and I have contributed a good deal towards the melting.

STAHOFF. His mother-in-law is extremely anxious about his wife's future, and the harder she tries to make him remember, the quicker he forgets...nothing ever happens to Fedia until he gets home.

KOROTKOFF [Playfully]. Yes, his wife is a darling... his sister-in-law [kissing his fingers] an angel, but his mother-in-law!...[Gesticulating] Smash my topper!...

STAHOFF [Drunkenly]. Yes, damn me! There is a bit of blood in him, and he don't like the curb...

* * * *

[Enter Fedia].

[Fedia at this period of his life is youthful [about 30], clean-shaven, with finely cut features and a romantic expression in his deep set eyes. Thought and emotion have already marked their deep imprints, but there is almost a complete separation of passion and intellect, and the mastery of one to the exclusion of the other, as occasion requires, constitutes his main characteristic.]

[His attitude at the moment betrays a nervous system overtaxed by drink and worry, and barely under control. His evening clothes are disordered, waistcoat unbuttoned and face flushed; in spite of the excess of drink, an undercurrent of tenderness reveals itself in most of his actions.]

FEDIA [Placing his arms on his two companions, right and left of him advancing with them towards C. of stage, nearest audience].

The absence of two such charming fellows like you was noticed in the dining room! Isn't it glorious here?...The wine, music and beautiful faces! What a contrast to the horrid life from which I fled,—mortgages and taxes, bills and responsibilities which I abhore! It's like paradise compared with purgatory...[Walking with them towards his table]. Come, boys, let us celebrate this blissful state with a final bottle!...

[Joining Fedia at the table, Korotkoff on his R., Stahoff on his L., Fedia C.]

KOROTKOFF [Drunkenly]. Which final bottle is this since this morning? Stahoff, you ought to know.

STAHOFF. Blowed, if I do!...You counted them... I didn't...

FEDIA [Fills their glasses, the three clink]. Here's to our new life of forgetfulness...[Drinks]. Isn't the wine magnificent? Isn't it inspiring?

STAHOFF. The wine is divine! [Lifting his glass]. To our wives and sweethearts, may they never meet...

KOROTKOFF [Gesticulating]. Gad, if ever they do meet...Smash my topper!...

STAHOFF [Looking upwards.] This is heaven! [Spills some wine]. Oh, hell!...

FEDIA [Dreamily]. To men of our social circle, there are three ways open: First, to make money and increase the vulgarities in which one lives, to work, work!

STAHOFF [Gesticulating]. No, not for me, damn me!

KOROTKOFF. Gee, I would do anything but work... anything!...Smash my topper!...

FEDIA [Bus.]. Well, a man holding his success disgusts me...I am not fit for such a career...Second, is to fight the existing order of things—for this one must be a hero, and heaven only knows I am not!...

STAHOFF [Gesticulating]. No, Fedia, damn me. let us be thankful for that!...

KOROTKOFF [Merrily]. Heigho, tally-ho, no not a h-e-r-o-o!...

FEDIA: The third is to seek forgetfulness, to enjoy life—wine and woman, to breath to the full, the free and intoxicating air of Bohemian life. One is happy in this world, as one forgets the world, and this (embracing them again as they get up and have a dance together) you my friends are helping me to do and do well!...

STAHOFF [Admiringly]. Hasn't he got some style, and doesn't he talk fine!...If he is less than a scientist, Fedia is more than an ordinary man, damn me!...

KOROTKOFF [Playfully]. No one is more sober than Fedia drunk, nor more drunk than Fedia sober, although at times he's too damn preachy to suit me.

STAHOFF [Drunkenly.] You are right, there are lots of so-called sober men who were born drunk. Fedia is a drunkard who was born sober. It's this polished talk of his that makes him such a favorite with the girls, all the girls here tumble over themselves to get him.

KOROTKOFF [Drunkenly to Fedia]. This Masha is just crazy about you. [Tapping him on the shoulder] You lucky dog! She is a peach! Smash my topper!...

STAHOFF [Drunkenly]. She's hot stuff, but Fedia can have her. Let me have another glass...[Noticing that the bottle is empty]. Get another bottle.

FEDIA [Excitedly]. Boys, if you value my friendship, keep Masha's name out of your discussions, and in her presence [pointing to table opposite]; there is your place.

*[Enter chorus in bright costumes and head decorations with Maha in the lead. Korotkoff and Stahoff comply with Fedia's request and move to table formerly occupied by Sasha and Abrezkov. Fedia returns to his table, eyeing Masha all the time. The chorus dance and sing [Selection]. Fedia throws a handful of gold to the dancers.]

STAHOFF. Jockeys, my boy, need watching [Excitedly]. But who won the last race? Who won the last race, damn me?

KOROTKOFF. Sloan did, won it by a neck, I tell you... he is no good, if Kakus hadn't been sick...Smash my top...per!...

STAHOFF [Irritated]. Your "topper" is getting on my nerves [Pointing to head]. It's solid mahogany, damn me!...

I tell you Sloan is the unbeaten paperweight champion jockey from England, and don't you forget it!...

[Masha joins Fedia centre.]

FEDIA [Now feels his wine, looking lovingly at Masha]. The finish you put to your dancing is superb...You dance divinely, and your voice is music to my ears...[Embracing]. [To the waiter, as he passes]. Give drinks to all that want it, as they want it and charge it to me!!

[The chorus girls, each in turn, trying in her own peculiar way to win Fedia over, walking past him, making eyes at him and touching him [picture].]

FIRST CHORUS GIRL. If you will only cross your legs with your right hand and my hand with gold, I will tell you your fortune. Both the past as well as the future are open to me. I reveal all, all, if only you will cross my hand with gold.

FEDIA [Protestingly]. Please leave me, I don't want my fortune told.

SECOND CHORUS GIRL [Offering Fedia a footstool, eyeing him]. What is your name...[pause]...No, I didn't mean it, I know it but too well...[Pause]. You are not very amiable, but I will continue to hope...[Moves up stage].

THIRD CHORUS GIRL [Offering some candy]. Your style just catches a woman, you are welcome to a kiss...[Extending her lips]. [Fedia does not respond.]

FIRST CHORUS GIRL [Eying Fedia, getting hold of his hand].

*The entire business of Chorus and Dancing can be omitted, in the interest of economy and yet the atmosphere retained.—*The Author.*

SECOND CHORUS GIRL [Hits him playfully with a rose]. Direct to your heart, I aim it, and as a token of love, you may claim it!...

FIRST GIRL [Reading his palm]. You will go to the gallows for a friend, true and devoted to the death, but you are not a model of conjugal fidelity.

FIFTH GIRL [Fedia gives her money and sends her off]. Turn this way, young man, the moon and stars beyond are inviting, come, follow me...

[Masha holds her ground. Fedia pays no attention to the sender of the rose, nor the others, keeping his eyes glued to those of Masha who responds. Intoxicated by the dancing and singing, he moves his chair gradually towards the centre of stage, then when the dance is finished, he mounts the chair, waving his hand in the air--excitedly, his blood aroused.]

Now Masha alone will dance, Masha alone! [Sitting down]. Masha! Masha!...

[He is applauded by the other visitors, some sitting, others standing and waving their handkerchiefs in approval.]

KOROTKOFF. I like your spirit, Fedia, smash my topper!...

STAHOFF. Masha, Masha, Masha!...

[Masha is beautiful, rather small, but wiry. Her dress and head attire combine and harmonize with her grace, capabilities and reputation as the Queen of the chorus.]

[Masha's dress and general make-up offer great opportunities to the lover of the picturesque in the world of colors.]

[The sleeves of her dress are short, displaying her arms to advantage, low neck. Sandles on her feet.]

[Handkerchief on her head covering up her jet black hair in part, but displaying it in this way to greater advantage.]

[Dazzled by the glitter and glamor which surround her, and above all by Fedia's attentions, Masha dances with abandon, dances as if it meant everything to her, putting her whole heart in it, dancing as if she were mad...]

[The respond from the spectators results in another dance, which Masha sings and dances around Fedia's chair, openly showing her partiality for him in her movements and gestures, sitting down on his knee as her dance is finished.]

KOROTKOFF [To his companion]. This dance is original! Oh, she's a great master in dancing--Smash my topper!

STAHOFF. So full of life! So vivid! Damn me! So real! A most accomplished dancer!

[The visitors applaud, Masha is indifferent to all but Fedia.]

FEDIA [Embracing]. Rest, my dear...Wonderful, wonderful! Where does all this life and fire you show come from? [Embracing more passionately.] What a pity that this height of human happiness cannot continue perpetually!

I have eyes only for you [Embracing]. My Queen, you have cast a spell over me, you have bewitched me! My heart beats like a sledge hammer the moment you approach and my veins fill with fire [Embracing]! Oh, Masha, Masha, you turn me all inside out!...

MASHA [Habitually petting him in turn]. And about the favor I asked...

FEDIA [Reflecting]. What?...the money?...Oh, yes! [Taking out bills from different pockets, handing it to her.]

Well, well, take it, my dear, take it!...

MASHA [Smiling, taking the money and hiding it in her corsage, then she removes a flower from her corsage, pinning it on]. Wear it for my sake, Fedia.

FEDIA [Embracing]. Masha, Masha, you are irresistible!...You open heaven for me and then beg for trifles! [Playing with the locket on her neck.] You have no idea how great and overwhelming your influence is over me. How little you understand.

MASHA [Inquiringly]. Why shouldn't I understand? Love is the price at which true love is bought.

FEDIA. There is just one blot on it...I am married!...

MASHA. Married? What difference does that make? Marriage is but a legal formula.

I know no other creeds than the dictates of my own heart; no other laws but the law of my affections...Love alone is supreme!...[Petting him.]

FEDIA. Then you do love me?

MASHA. You stupid, isn't it self-evident!

FEDIA [Kissing her]. Wonderful! [Filling her glass.] Drink more, my dear, drink some more!...

[Enter doorman in uniform, handing card to Fedia.]

DOORMAN. She looks a *real* lady.

FEDIA [Confused]. Of course, she is!...God!...My wife's sister! Say I am out...I can't see her...

MASHA [Pleadingly]. Why not? She is your wife's sister, you said...

FEDIA [Perplexed]. This is awkward!

[To doorman.] Is there no other room or place where I could receive her?...

DOORMAN [Hesitatingly]. We are rather crowded... unless...[interrupted]...

MASHA. Why not here? [Pointedly.] I will go. [Exits.]

FEDIA. Show her in.

[Improving his appearance and things on the table, but with little success.] [Enter Sasha—R.]

[She is in out of door clothes and deeply veiled, as before.]

[The crowds at the drinking tables disappear behind the scenes.]

FEDIA [Rising to meet her, they meet C]. You, in this place, and alone...

SASHA [Nervously]. Forgive my intrusion, Fedia.

FEDIA [Motioning her to a chair—Sasha taking it, they face each other].

SASHA [Excitedly, still standing]. Fedia, I entreat you, come home!...

FEDIA [Repeating the invitation, she sits down].

I understand you perfectly, my dear, and in your place would make the same attempt at patching it up somehow.

[Petting her.] But believe me, dear, kind girl that you are, that in my place, you would do identically the same thing.

[Sasha, eying the wine.]

I mean...you would relinquish your rights to waste another's life!...

SASHA [Protestingly]. Not wasting...Love and affection await you...Liza can't live without you...

FEDIA [Assertively]. She can and will live happier without than with me...Her individuality, the freshness of her life shall not be sacrificed for the mere preservation of a certain place in a certain room. I have lost her love, and there is nothing else I would care to keep.

SASHA [Nods her head in approval]. [He lights a cigarette].

SASHA. Fedia, I am knocking at the door of your heart, Liza's happiness is with you.

FEDIA [Emphatically]. Never! [His voice trembles for a moment.] It's the truth and you know it.

[Petting her.] Dear, kind, sweet Sasha...Let me give you an illustration...One may bend a piece of cardboard frequently, repeatedly, without affecting it in the least, but do it once too often and it snaps...Then it's broken!...This is my case and that of your sister. We can't look each other straight in the eye!...Believe me, it's the plain unvarnished truth I am telling you.

SASHA [Thoughtfully]. Possibly, possibly, all I know is that were I in Liza's place, I would feel awkward.

FEDIA. Yes, you...

[Enter waiter relieving the floor and table of the empty bottles, anticipating a new order. Fedia motions him to leave and he exits.]

SASHA [Getting up]. Is this final?

FEDIA [Emphatically]. Yes.

SASHA [Pleadingly, her hand on his shoulder]. Fedia! do come back...

FEDIA [Affectionately—quite overcome]. Thank you, my dear, to me you will always remain a cherished memory!...[Kisses her on the forehead.]

SASHA [Excitedly, smelling his breath]. No, I will not say good-bye. [Sitting down again.]

I see you have been drinking, but this is no excuse for shirking responsibilities.

FEDIA. Listen, then [pause], its a secret...True, I am Liza's husband, but I am entirely superfluous...I have neither the right nor cause to be jealous. The man she loves is a mutual friend and they love each other since childhood. We shall go our different ways! Henceforth, I relinquish my power of wasting her life, not as a concession, but as a duty.

SASHA. You don't do yourself anything like justice—Fedia, she loves none but you!...

FEDIA [Collectively, speaking with reserve and feeling]. Oh, yes, she loves...loves like a true, honest woman, which allows herself to love none but her husband, but...remove the obstacle [pointing to himself] and her real love will assert itself [Convincingly]. Depend upon it!...

I shall remove the obstacle, and they will both be happy!...

SASIA [Waving her hand in protest]. Don't talk like this, Fedia.

FEDIA [Touching her]. You know it's the truth...I am on the cross-roads and I know it...I will not come back, but

shall rejoice in their happiness, I can do no more. It's the only honorable way out of my dishonorable action. They shall have their liberty...I will give them their freedom!... Tell them so! [Kissing her forehead once more and moving at some distance from the table, as a sign for her to leave.] Say no more, my dear, say no more!...

SASHA [Affectedly]. Fedia, you are a dear!...[She looks her thanks to him.]

[The band behind the scenes resumes playing.]

[Exit Sasha.]

[Excitement behind the scenes.]

[The chorus returns.]

[Masha and a rival are having a fistical argument about Fedia.]

GROUP [Excitedly]. Masha started it!...

GROUP. No, no! It's the other, I've heard her! [Wrangling between themselves.]

MASHA [Stamping her feet—picking up an empty wine bottle at a nearby table]. You are not fit for a decent chorus. [About to hit her companion.] You are a cat! cat! cat!...

RIVAL [Resisting the attack]. You love like one!... [Snapping her fingers.] Do you suppose he will ever give you another thought after to-night!...A chorus girl the wife of a nobleman, indeed! Ha, ha, ha!

[Exchange of slaps between the women.]

FEDIA [Joining them, embracing Masha]. This is the first time I have ever seen you in a temper, darling...[Pleadingly.] Make up. [Giving money to rival.] There: there!

RIVAL [Pockets the money and her attitude towards Masha instantly changes. The women embrace each other].

FEDIA. Now, another song.

KOROTKOFF (Gets out a coin—to Stahoff). I will match you for the drinks, the one who loses pays.

STAHOFF [Getting out a coin in his turn]. Head, I win, tail, you lose. [Pause.] You are sure to lose...damn me!

KOROTKOFF [Throws his coin]. What will you bet? Smash my topper!

STAHOFF [Eying the coin]. Tails! You pay—I told you so. [Shaking his hand.] Thank you, old man!...

KOROTKOFF [Beaten]. All right, you win...[placing his money on tray], but you couldn't do it a second time... What will you bet?...Smash my topper!

[Masha rejoins Fedia. They clink their glasses and Fedia spills some wine over Masha's dress, Masha lifting herself in her seat.]

MASHA [Excitedly]. My dress, you spoiled my best dress, you naughty, naughty Fedia.

FEDIA [On his knees on the floor near her drying her dress and making himself foolish generally, picture].

[Enter Victor Karenin.]

[A handsome man of 30 and of a romantic disposition... In type he is the very opposite of Fedia, clean-cut features, carries himself with dignity.]

[Doorman, noticing Karenin's fine clothes, he greets him cordially.]

DOORMAN [Attempting to relieve him of his clothes]. Fine weather we are having. [Pointedly] Any particular young lady you wish me to call?

KARENIN [Embarassed]. No, thank you!

DOORMAN [Playfully]. I see, sir, you belong to those who are not particular. [Makes movement towards adjoining room.] I will pick you a winner!...

KARENIN [Holding him back]. You don't understand.

[Fedia's eyes meet Karenin's.]

FEDIA [Coming forward]. Well, well, Victor...the least expected...[Turning over Victor's belongings to attendant and walking with him towards his table]. Listen to the music...Isn't it sweet, isn't it...I tell you there is nothing like ragtime music.

KARENIN [Stopping on the way, as he notices Masha]. I have a private word for your ear...

[Aloud]. How well you are looking Fedia! A little dissipation improves you.

FEDIA [Inviting him to sit down]. About...

KARENIN [Sitting down]. I have a letter for you from your wife!

FEDIA [Taking letter—offering wine to Victor]. You are the last person I would send for...

KARENIN. *Good*, send for me now!...

FEDIA [Reading letter]. You know its contents?...

KARENIN [Pushing aside his glass]. I do...and went to say...[Interrupted.]

FEDIA. Wait! Wait! Don't think I am drunk. [Drinking] Well, I am drunk, but not on this subject. [Bottle in hand] What were you told to say? That is all I care to know.

KARENIN [Lighting a cigarette]. Your wife expects you... wants you to forget everything and return home...

FEDIA [Facing him]. Of all men in the world, why ask you to fulfill this delicate mission!...

KARENIN [Smoking]. Her mother telephoned for me and then Liza asked me...

FEDIA [Helping himself to another drink]. Now I am sobering up... [Drinking again] This wine is splendid...

KARENIN [Removing the bottle from table]. Don't drink any more of this distilled fire and liquid damnation! Fedia, Fedia, pull yourself together... Stifle this ruinous passion of yours... [Getting hold of him.] I ask you not so much in her name as in my own... my auto is at the door. Come, let us go!...

FEDIA [Supporting himself on Victor]. Victor, Victor... I appreciate the fact that you want to give me a lift, but I am too heavy for you.

KARENIN [With renewed vigor]. Come, brace up, old man, out of the mud, allow yourself to be persuaded... Haven't we been close friends for nearly fifteen years?

FEDIA. As long as that, and yet you think you can change me... Ah, you are a better man than I, you are a man that's a man, while I am a good-for-nothing!... If a thought to return home ever entered my mind, the sight of you strengthens my resolution. [Stretching out his hand for another bottle.] I couldn't, wouldn't accompany you. [Sitting down drunk-enly.] Wh... where, should I go?

KRENIN [Shaking him to and fro]. Is this to be the issue of your life, ever yielding to drink temptations abusing your talents, your education, the best given gifts of God to man, putting out the light of reason with your own hands.

FEDIA [Plaintively]. How can I appear before them in this way... with my trembling hands and shaking feet... [Bus] oh my head, my poor head! What is the matter with my head? My brain, my poor brain!

KARENIN. Come to my house. You will sober up over night and rise once more to the social position and station to which you belong; then to-morrow, to-morrow.

[Shaking him too and fro]. Fedia... To-morrow is but another to-day... To-morrow, she will remain what she is

and I what I am...[Drinking, then flinging the glass to the ground]. Pull your bad tooth at once and have done with...

[Masha comes forward.]

MASHA [To Fedia]. The girls want to drink his health.

[Enter chorus, in changed costumes, glasses in hand.]

[Quietly] What name?

CHORUS. A guest is here, give him a hearty cheer! And drink his health, hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!...

FEDIA [Standing up, lifting his glass, the girls join].

Welcome...Welcome, the Honorable Victor Michilowich, thrice welcome!

[Staggers in his walk]. I am having a glorious time. Waiter, some more champagne.

For he's a jolly good fellow—for he's a jolly good fellow—for he's a jolly good fellow—so say all of us!.....Hip... hip...hurray!...[Picture.]

KARENIN [Confused, bows in acknowledgment, then to Fedia]. What does it cost?...[Emphatically] How much?

FEDIA [Drunkenly and goodnaturedly]. Give them twenty-five.

KARENIN [Bashfully, hands over the money to Masha].

FEDIA [Drunkenly—making a clean sweep of its contents, then sitting down on the table]. Talk about your Wagners, Beethoven and Mozart...but there is nothing, nothing like ragtime songs for me...[Getting down, supporting himself on a nearby chair.] There is no music so dear to my ear [Humming a popular song].

[Karenin looks nervously at his watch, then exits.]

Drink does away with shame...When drunk you are afraid of nobody and care for nothing. You can make all kinds of promises and as easily forget them. No man is so sober as the one who is occasionally otherwise.

[Masha rejoins Fedia.]

[Fedia calling.] Victor...Victor...Come and shake hands, come and shake hands...[Looking about] Where is Victor? Where is Karenin? [Noticing that he left.] Well, let him go!...[Nudging Masha]. You know who it was?...

MASIA. You have just told me...

FEDIA [Drunkenly]. So I did, so I did:...He's a fine fellow...not a good-for-nothing like me! He came to call me home. M-y...my wife loves me [embracing her] and... look what I am doing...

MASHA. Go to her, pity her...go home.

FEDIA [Nestling up closer]. You think I should, and I think I shouldn't...She doesn't love me...there!...

MASHA [Reflectively]. Of course, if there is no love, it's different. Love alone is supreme!...

FEDIA. True love is the poetry of life...but how do you know...how do you know?

MASHA. Evidently I do. Ah, Fedia, if you were only sober, I could go with you to the ends of the world!

[Chorus re-enters, singing and dancing is resumed.]

FEDIA [Throws a shower of gold coins at the chorus and musicians, and some glasses to the floor, then...[His arms around Masha's neck in violent embrace,—he gradually drops to the floor, his head on hers, exhausted.] [Picture.]

How enchanting!...S-p-lendid! [Intoxicated by love, wine and song.]

If only like this one could lull himself to sleep...into eternity...

CURTAIN.

FOR CURTAIN CALL:—

[The waiter enters with bill on a tray, Fedia signs without examining it, handing the waiter some bills as his tip.]

"FEDIA."

ACT 2—SCENE I.

[Fedia Protosoves Lodgings in a third-class boarding house; an attic room, sloping roof, low ceiling, clean but gloomy, with but one entrance, which is up stage. Left of Centre, panel door. Not far from the door on the Right, a narrow window with views of neighboring roofs in the perspective. Not far from window a writing table, cheap inkstand and writing materials; wine bottle, tumbler and a few old books upon it, a few chairs near the table and wall up stage; old-fashioned washstand on the R., not far from it in the corner small table with newspapers, etc. On the left an old bed, pegs with clothes on the wall near it. The room serves Fedia for all purposes and requirements.]

[Discovered Fedia and Alexandrove sitting near table drinking. Fedia has considerably aged, showing marks of dissipation.]

[Alexandrove is a drunkard of the intellectual type, shabbily dressed...Eccentric to the extreme in his wig make-up, manners, etc.]

ALENANDROVE. I say, Fedia, sorry to bother you so often, old man, but if you will only lend me another ten dollars, I will be your debtor for life!

FEDIA [Playfully]. I know you will [Pause], but this is not the only reason why I can't give it to you!...

ALEXANDROVE [Drinking] Bills don't bother me, but I need a little ready cash.

FEDIA. My dear friend, we are both in the same boat. I am just one step from hitting the sidewalk myself. Yesterday the landlady sent word that she will raise the rent...Let her raise it, I replied...I am sure I can't do it!

ALEXANDROVE [Sympathetically]. As bad as that?...

FEDIA. Ready money and I have not been on speaking terms for some time...I have already pawned everything of practical value, except...[Taking out a gold watch]...this watch, the only memory from bygone days.

ALENANDROVE. Fedia, you talk as if you had a hang-over.

FEDIA [Eying the watch, meditatively.] To pawn or not to pawn, that is the question!...

ALEXANDROVE [Lightheartedly]. What are these expensive trinkets made for, except for the convenience of raising money on them in the hour of need...with a watch like this in my possession... [Playfully]. How long do you think it would take me to make up my mind?

FEDIA [Eying the watch]. This watch has been in the family for generations...There is a sentiment about it which you couldn't understand...

[To the watch] I stuck to you as long as I could, old pal, but the time to part is at hand, our pleasant friendship is ended!...

[To Alexandrove, handing him the watch]. Do it for me... [Pause]...I haven't the heart.

ALEXANDROVE [Examining the watch carefully, then gaily]. Don't look like a funeral, old man. [Playfully] Just let me do the negotiating with the friend around the corner...

FEDIA [Meaningly, with a tortured mind and heart]. You may not find me in upon your return, kindly pay my bill to the landlady, and keep the change...

ALEXANDROVE [Excitedly]. Keep the change?...

FEDIA. Yes...[Confused at a look from Alexandrove]...until I ask for it...[Petting him on the shoulder]...Goodbye, old friend. [Exit Alexandrove].

[Fedia bolts the door, approaching the writing table... opening drawers, taking out revolver and hunting for cartridges in various places...bus.]

MASHA [Knocking on the door from without. Impatiently]: Fedia, Fedia...why lock yourself in...open, Fedia!...

FEDIA [Removes the wine bottle from table, hiding it under the blanket, leaving glasses on table, replacing the revolver in drawer. Unbolts the door and lets her in.]

Thank you for coming, my dear, I'm lonely, very lonely.

MASHA. Why didn't you come to me? [Noticing the half empty wine glass on table—reproachfully]. Drinking again, and this after all your promises! For shame, Fedia, for shame!

FEDIA [Plaintively]. I am stony, you see...I need forgetfulness and the wine is a great medium.

MASHA [Reproachfully]. Don't Masha me!...If you loved me you would have obtained a divorce long ago...Others have asked you, and yet you have done nothing!...

FEDIA [Plaintively]. You know why, you know the reason.

MASHA [Pointedly]. Rubbish!... You are a good-for-nothing-nobody—and this explains everything...

FEDIA. I say, you are rubbing it in.. Your allusions are not pleasant, and you know it.

MASHA [Snapping her fingers]. Pshaw—unpleasant indeed... tell it to the marines! You don't care for anything or anybody, except yourself.

FEDIA. Your love, my dear, means everything to me... Everything!...

MASHA. Mine, yes, but yours doesn't even exist.

FEDIA [Petting her]. You know it, know it but too well—I will not try to convince you... [disheartened]... what is the use?...

MASHA [Crying]. If indeed you love me, why then do you torture me, Fedia?

FEDIA [Embracing her]. Don't cry, darling, life is full of gladness, and tears are not becoming to such pretty cheeks and eyes. [Kisses her—moment of bliss.]

[Enter Count Abrezkov, hat in hand, rather uneasy, noticing the position].

ABREZKOV: Pardon me.

FEDIA [Distantly]. With whom have I the honor? [Recognizing] Ah, Count Abrezkov! [Handshaking.]

ABREZKOV [Plaintively.] Pardon, pardon... I was shown to this door and... My knocks were evidently not heard.

FEDIA [Motioning him to a chair]. The girl is absolutely innocent, I assure you. Our relations are romantic and friendly, but it ends there... [Pause]... May I ask the nature of your visits?... I live so high and stand so low that I can't think it's a mere social call on your part.

ABREZKOV. Circumstances don't change the man, but you are quite right, I am here on business. I come on behalf of my friends to find out your intentions regarding your wife.

FEDIA. My attitude towards my wife... [correcting himself], that is towards my former wife, is definite and settled. I'll never disturb her in any way. She is absolutely free as far as I am concerned, to act as she pleases.

ABREZKOV. It is kind and generous, but for Mme. Karenin and her son, your private release is not sufficient. Mme. Karenin will never reconcile herself to such a marriage for her son.

FEDIA. A divorce then, well I notified them long ago that I am ready! But the legal conditions and technicalities it involves are degrading.

ABREZKOV [Pressing her hand]. I sympathize with you, but what is to be done?

FEDIA. Believe me, I will rejoice in their happiness, but to lie, and display all this horrible comedy of divorce proceedings as required by law is intolerable to me...

I am a man punctured with shortcomings, yet I find this particular procedure revolting. I can't participate in it. But this does not mean that I will remain as an obstacle in the way of their happiness. [Drinking]. There is another way, simpler, pleasanter! They shall have their freedom, tell them so.

ABREZKOV [Dark thoughts crossing his mind]. When? When?

FEDIA [Pressing his R. hand, left on his shoulder]. Soon, very soon. [Abrezkov bows and exits.]

[Left alone Fedia hastily writes a few lines, then takes out again the revolver from the drawer, succeeds in finding the cartridges, examines and loads it. Placing the revolver before him as he helps himself to more drinks. Pressing his hand to his forehead—taking off his coat and loosening his necktie that he may breath more freely, making a few paces about the room.]

[To himself] This is the end...I am so tired!...Fedia Protosov the time has come for footing up your life's accounts. [Picks up the revolver, standing nearer the table, revolver in hand, making a semicircle with the sharp edge].

All is over with me...everything is dead!...[His mind is dazed]. Yes, suicide, death, man's best friend; the kindly frost that cracks the shell and leaves the kernel room to germinate. Death which prepares the old elements to take on another form of expression, a round higher in the ladder of life.

[Is about to fire the shot as Alexandrove, without knocking opens the door. Alexandrove very drunk, clings to the door and nearby chair for support. In his arms he holds two bottles of wine and a bundle of provisions].

ALEXANDROVE [Making no attempt to stop him, but going straight for the wine bottle, drinking rapidly as he speaks.

You want to shoot yourself? Go ahead, go ahead. They want to humiliate you, but you will show them who you are... I understand you. I understand you...I understand everything because I am a genius. [Lifting his glass]. Fedia, darling, here's to your long journey!...

[PICTURE].

FEDIA [Sitting down, placing his revolver before him, then taking up his interrupted letter, writing as he talks].

ALEXANDROVE [Refilling his glass]. That's right: [Waving his hand]. I will not stop you. To a genius life and death are immaterial. I die in life and live in death. You want to kill yourself so that they may feel sorry for you. While I—I shall kill myself that the whole world might understand what it has lost. I shall not hesitate. [Getting up]...I take this...[Grasps the revolver] and it's done!... But it is too soon for me! ...[Puts down the revolver]... Not just yet...

[PICTURE].

FEDIA [Replacing the revolver, more in earnest than jest]. Alexandrove, you are welcome to my wine, but not to my cartridges.

ALEXANDROVE [Producing his own revolver]. Never fear, I have my own...Many a day have I gone without food, but never without my loaded revolver.

FEDIA [Sympathetically]. You are right ,one should always be ready...[Dreamily]. Death is the greatest blessing which was ever given to man.

ALEXANDROVE [A sandwich in one hand and wine glass in the other, drinking]: It is...it certainly is! [Reflectively]. You said you had friends in both places... [pause]...well, if you should happen to go to the other place, take my advice and apply for the job of an iceman! [Eating]...You are sure to find it cooling...[drinking].

[Enter Masha].

[Masha picks up Fedia's half finished letter, reading it as the two men are talking].

FEDIA [To Alexandrove, his hand on his shoulder]. You are a great man, my friend, and I am grateful to you for coming in, but just at present you will oblige me by getting out.

ALEXANDROVE [Making for the door]. I am going! . . . I am going! . . . but . . . [glancing at the revolver] . . . promise to wait for me . . . [Coming closer]. I will then tell you a funny story . . . something decidedly original and new, both in this world and the next. . . At least, until I get there. . .

[Makes for the door, then returns]. I have almost forgotten to turn over the money. Your landlady was out as I came in. . . [Handing Fedia several bills, the latter taking them and placing in his pocket, walks towards the door, then turns around]. One moment, if you are really going, Fedia . . . I have a Hebrew friend, who will accommodate you with a check for the cash! . . . [Exits].

MASHA [Excitedly—pointing to open letter in her hands].

Oh, you fool. . . you idiot. . . did you really? [Pointing to loaded revolver]. . . ha, ha! Suicide is the greatest sin a man can commit. Foolish Fedia. . . before making an attempt at dying, one should first learn how to live. . . You are only a weak man, not a bad man. . . Is this a fitting climax to an honorable life? What about my love for you? . . . What about me?

FEDIA. I can't go through with it all. . . the hypocrisy, the falsehood of the divorce court. . . and having promised to free them, I wanted to keep my promise.

MASHA. God will take your life when the time comes; until then, one has but one choice, to live. . . and learn how to live. . .

[Pointing to forehead]. Think about blowing brains in, before attempting to blow them out. Suicide is a fitting climax for a coward. . .

FEDIA. True. . . I am a failure! . . .

MASHA [Quickly]. Only in so far as you admit it.

FEDIA [In the same strain]. My sin has found me out. . . I am an outcast. Suicide would not be worse for me, and it will help them. I am in everybody's way and in my own.

MASHA. Not in mine, I will cling to you like a leech! Like Alexandrove, I am not quite ready for the next world, and I want you in this! . . .

FEDIA [Plaintively]. I have to set free my wife, my friend, I promised! . . .

MASHA. You promised to set them free, very well, set them free, but this does not necessitate self-destruction.

FEDIA. What else can I do to disentangle myself. [Covering his face with his hands] help me, oh, help me!

MASHA. There are a hundred ways!...

FEDIA. Tell me one!...Just one!

MASHA [Taking him in hand, improving his appearance, handing him his hat, then taking his arm]. It is so easy to repair the worst you have done. Come, brace up! I will tell you as we walk...Are you an expert swimmer?

[They walk towards exit C.] No...very well...then there is a simpler way!...

THE CURTAIN FALLS FOR A MINUTE TO INDICATE THE PASSING OF TIME.

"FEDIA"

Second Act—Scene Two.

[Same room and surroundings; carefully arranged to establish Fedia's identity. Loud knocking and voice behind the scenes as Curtain rises.

POLICEMAN [Knocking with his stick]. Open, or I will break the door. Open, in the Name of the Law. Open, I say,—open! You wouldn't open—well, then, we will see!

[Receiving no reply, the policeman breaks with his club the upper panel of the door, getting his hand through it and making for the lock to see if the key is not from within. The key is not there].

LANDLADY [Nervously]. Hold, my good man, break no more. They are bringing his clothes from the station, the key is probably there...

[The policeman's arm is removed, knocking discontinued, and a few moments later the door is opened with a key].

[Enter policeman followed by a coroner, another policeman with Fedia's clothes, and the landlady, the latter greatly perplexed and alarmed].

CORONER [Assisted by the two policemen, who placing the clothes on chair near by, look about, collecting a few other old clothes which they add to those brought in].

Now, more than ever, I am absolutely convinced that the man who shot himself on the bridge and the former occupant of this room are one and the same person. [Glancing about the room], the landlady's evidence is conclusive!...

FIRST POLICEMAN [Calling coroner's attention to an open letter on the table].

CORONER [Picking up letter]. Addressed to the proprietress of this boarding house...[Opening, taking out contents]. Only an unreceipted bill and money enough to cover the amount. [Hands it to the landlady].

[Picking up another letter.] This one is sealed...[Reads.] "To my Wife, Liza Protosov:"

[To First Policeman]...Bring in the woman...

POLICEMAN [Calling.] Liza Protosov!

[Enter Liza.]

[She is gowned in black, laboring under great excitement.]

CORONER [Reading from a typewritten report in his hand]. "Half-past two this morning on Brooklyn bridge a flash was noticed through the darkness followed by a pistol shot. The water instantly bubbled up near the spot and the man's cap was found in the water shortly afterwards. The bullet passed through the cap, and there were stains of blood on the cap, the man was evidently shot in the head. [Lifting his eyes and noticing Liza,—in an official manner.]

Your name?...

LIZA. Liza Protosov!...[Laboring under a great strain]. Something awful has happened!...

CORONER [Handing her the letter]. This belongs to you! [Watching her closely].

LIZA [With an air of perplexity which depicts itself in her face, taking letter, opens and reads, [Hysterically, lowering her head].

He is dead...[overcome], dead, oh, my God!...God's hand is upon us!...[With eyes full of tears, she drops to the floor on her knees before the chair with his clothes on, in inconsolable grief, the open letter falls from her hands to the floor]. Dead in the prime of life, God, what words can express my grief!...What have I done, what have I done! [Pause]. He was kind, gentle...forgive me, Fedia!...forgive me! [A painful pause.]

CORONER [Picking up letter, reads]: "Dearest Liza: I call you so for the last time...It's goodbye. My hour is over...When you receive this, you will know that you are free. Don't misjudge me. Fedia Protosov."]

[Places it with his other documents, then turns to Liza who during all this time remained on the floor sobbing. Lifting her to a sitting position.]

LIZA [In inconsolable grief]. What words could express my sorrow!]

CORONER [Earnestly]. You have my profoundest, deepest sympathy. [Making the sign of the cross]. May God's good-will be upon us all, and heavenly bliss be his!... Calm yourself, Madam, calm yourself.

LIZA [Burying her face in her hands].

Dead!...Oh, God, his blood is upon me! [Her tears come fast and thick—crying and wringing her hands.]

It is all through me, through me! Oh, merciful heaven, so much misery!...dead, dead!

CORONER [Laboring under a great strain to repress his emotions]. I have yet the unpleasant duty of completing the formal legal papers, although, in this instance, it is scarcely necessary...

[Places his hand in Protosov's left breast pocket].

Enameled cigar case and match-box with the initials F. P. on it!

LIZA [Hysterically]. My birthday presents!...

CORONER [Placing his hand in vest pocket] His watch and chain—[Opening locket, to Liza]. Your picture in the locket...

[Placing his hand in other vest pocket]. His wedding ring ... [reading] "Liza and Fedia, with love, 1900."

LANDLADY. His clothes are practically the same he had on yesterday, I can swear to that...

CORONER [Inviting Liza and Landlady in turn, to sign the various legal papers, producing and lending them a fountain pen.]

Sign here [Turning over page], and here [moving his hand over page]. It is always best to comply with regulations.

[Reading aloud.]

"We the undersigned recognize the belongings found on Brooklyn Bridge as unquestionably that of Fedia Protosov."

- [1] Cigar case and match-box.
- [2] Watch chain and medallion.
- [3] All his clothes, including cap found in the water
- [4] His wedding ring.

Adds his own signature to the list.

LIZA [Her hand trembles as she is about to put her name to the document.]

Give me air, give me air, I am stifling! [Momentarily insane with grief, fear and love. Her L. hand to her throat, as if gasping for breath; her R. hand gidily to her forehead; makes a few steps, but has to catch hold of the police-

man to support herself; moves her lips without making sounds; swoons in his arms.]

POLICEMAN [Quite composed, takes hold of her head and motions the other policeman to take hold of her feet, advancing with body towards door]. [To second policeman]. Keep the body level with the head, let the blood circulate freely.

CORONER. Place her on a couch in a large room. She will recover there. In all such cases there is nothing like fresh air. All she needs is air, air!...

[Aside] This evidence is positively conclusive.

[Exit all but the coroner and one policeman.]

CORONER [Consulting his watch]. Bring in the eye witnesses! Bring in the man who offered to search the river!

[Policeman brings in Masha and Fedia Protosov].

[Masha is in her ordinary clothes, Fedia with a wig and facical make up which completely transform his appearance. Both of them bowing low to the coroner as they enter].

[To Masha]. Your name?...

MASHA [Bowing low]. Masha, sir...

CORONER [To Fedia]. You are a wanderer?...Your name?...

FEDIA [Bowing low]. I. M. Blank, your Honor....

CORONER [To both]. You were on the bridge at the time the shot was fired?

MASHA [Both bowing]. Aye, sir...we were passin' by!...

FEDIA. Me pet an' I...[Drunkenly-gesticulating]. We was right dere, your honor on de spot as it was [digging Masha in he rib], wasn't we, Masha.

MASHA [Returning a dig]. We certainly was! Holy mackerel!...

FEDIA [Steadying himself on his legs]. I heared de shot, an'...an' saw de revolver fallin'...Saw it wid mine own eyes...I can swear to dat, your honor...[Noticing the cap]. Dis am de very cap ,ain't it Masha? De very cap we saw in de water.

MASHA [Excitedly]. Den, den I saw a cop, an',...an' I cried...can swear to dat, your honor...

FEDIA [Steading himself as above].

Gee, how she hollered...den de cop started toward us... Golly, how slow he were!...

MASHA [Gesticulating, extending her right hand. Let me search de river, said me pal, I's sure to come in contact wid de body...No, no, sas de cop...Dis am de business of de river police. He axed us to carry de close to de police station, an der we stayed all night, detained as exercises.

CRONER [Correcting her]. You mean accessories. We have practically all the evidence; charges against you are withdrawn. The evidence on hand establishes the fact that it was a suicide...[picking up cap]...it's the bullet through the cap and the blood stains from within that finally convince me, that the man has shot himself in the head.

FEDIA [Drunkenly to Masha]. He must have been drunk...off his trolley, had a bet or somethin'...What a foolish men! [Steadying himself on his legs in attitude]. Gee, what a singular fool! [Laughing]. He, he...to blow your brains out on a bridge! on a bridge!

MASHA [Gesticulating]. He blowed in his money, den he blowed out 'es brains, but he were no fool! [Widening her feet in attitude.]

When you are studen on de parapet, an' pull de trigger, an' fall off der bridge, ye makes sure of killin' yerself, as it were between de fire and de water...no, no, I tell ye, 'e were no fool!...

FEDIA [Pointing to his forehead]. 'e must have been out of his mind...If de cop had only let me go, I would have had de body by now...I's sure of dat, your honor...

CORONER [Playfully]. We will get the body without you!... [Impatiently]. Sign these papers, and then you may go to...

FEDIA [Shamefaced]. Make a cross for me, your honor, writin' ain't 'xactly in me line.

MASIIA [Bowing low]. Nor mine...me heducation have been neglected...

CORONER [Consulting his watch, then to the policeman, as they exit].

Couldn't you pick up better witnesses than these blockheads!...[To them]. You are free...Go to the devil...

[Exit coroner and policemen.]

MASHA [Hearkening at the doors and convincing herself that they are alone...kissing him]. Well done, my brave wanderer, well done! I congratulate you on a very neat piece of work...[Her hand to her heart]. Oh, how I was afraid you would give the whole show away!...

FEDIA. More than once have I been on the point of doing it.

[Taking a long breath]. I need hardly tell you that had I anticipated half as much trouble, I would much rather have consented to a legitimate divorce, to the malice of lawyers, opinion of judges and to public curiosity.

MASHA [Enjoying the novelty of the situation]. But now the die is cast. No, I disagree with you...this was the easiest way, and my idea of firing the shot through the cap, as well as my fingers blood inside the cap, have capped the climax. [Pause]. You were so excited you haven't even noticed how the blood was put on.

FEDIA [Weakening]. Perhaps you are right...[pause] ...It is not every man who is given the opportunity of being a material witness at his own funeral!...[Reflectively]. The situation is novel, and there was no perjury...we didn't sign anything, and the others don't know.

MASHA [Smiling broadly]. It's only a practical joke on a stupid law which we have outwitted. In the lies and fabrications which have been made the State shares with us in the guilt...Now you are free to start a new life with me... [pause]...I am sure I don't know what I enjoy most, your funeral, or our forthcoming wedding!...

FEDIA [Uneasy]. After all, we are on very ticklish ground...

MASHA [Making light of it]. Oh, you are a worry... Let us from this moment start life anew, and together atone for the past.

FEDIA [Reflectively]. They couldn't get any two better witnesses than you and I...We ought to be grateful, for that, Masha...

MASHA [Taking him under her arm and walking towards exit.]

You were magnificently drunk while sober, but will you permanently talk sober while drunk...I wonder...I wonder...

C U R T A I N .

"F E D I A"

ACT III.—[TEN YEARS LATER.]

The Criminal Court.

A large spacious room. Door R. C. leading to the corridor. Inscription:—"Criminal Court," Part One," on the doors. On the left of audience there is a raised platform, three steps leading up to it.

Upon the platform, a table covered with green cloth. Next to wall C. of table, arm chair with high carved oak back, the place occupied by the Judge. Inkstand, pen and paper, pencils and glass paper weights on the table.

Directly under the judge's table is the secretary's table on a level with the floor, writing material and legal documents upon it, chair at its side.

On the left of the judges table is a small table occupied by the clerk of the court. The space on the right of the judge is occupied by witnesses and prisoners when cross-questioned. L. C. on the right of judge's table and platform is the jury box, consisting of twelve seats in three rows of caned chairs, raised one above the other.

Not far from the jury box a low railing and door, dividing the above mentioned platform and tables from the rest of the room.

Outside the railing on a level with the jury box is a square table occupied by the District Attorney and the Lawyers for the defense.

The rear of the room is filled with benches for witnesses and spectators.

On the witness benches there are several familiar faces.

As the Curtain rises, the court room is partly filled, the Clerk of the Court and Secretary are in their respective places, and in the jury box eleven out of the twelve places are occupied,—one juror No. 11 is still missing.

The Secretary arranges his papers, court usher near him. The usher is in uniform, the secretary in ordinary clothes.

The court usher taking legal papers from the secretary and placing them on the judges' table.

Judged by their dress and mannerism, the men in the jury box have evidently been drawn from all the different elements which constitute society.

In each and every instant the facial expression harmonizes with the outward makeup.

[Enter Juror No. 11, walking briskly to the Clerk's table and speaking in an undertone, then quickly returning to jury box, resuming his seat].

[The District Attorney comes in, resuming his seat at his table, and is instantly absorbed in reading and looking through his papers, getting ready for business].

[Enter Usher, walking up to raised platform, addressing all present in a loud voice]:

USHER. The Court is coming! (Enter Judge taking his seat.)

The clerk hands the Judge an unfolded paper.

JUDGE [To Juror No. 11]. You are late to-day for the second time, Mr. Curioso, and this time your fine will be heavy.

JUROR No. 11 [Rising in his seat]. Your honor I am a commuter, and this morning the 7:01 express did not arrive until 8:44.

JUDGE [Sternly]. You are fined to a permanent stay in the city during your jury term.

JUROR No. 11 [Nervously]. Yes, your honor...and the extra expense?

JUDGE [Playfully]. We will see!...The court may contribute towards it, if inclined to do so.

[Changing his position from time to time, as he speaks, handling his papers, pencils, penknife, etc.]

Now, gentlemen of the jury, a word to you as to your duties, responsibilities and privileges, before we resume the business of the court where we left off yesterday.

[All the jurors listening with respectful attention, Mr. Curioso nodding his head approvingly at every sentence as the Judge speaks.]

You are within your rights to interrogate the prisoner, but only through the Court. You are at liberty to make notes, but the secrecy of your discussions must be absolute!... Your duty is to judge, not falsely, but in accord with your conception of justice...[pause].

In the case now before us, you are already familiar with some of the facts, and are particularly invited and requested to examine the articles put in as evidence...

[Consulting the papers before him].

Call Mr. Hector Berns.

USHER [In a loud voice]. Hector Berns!

[Berns walking up to and taking the witness stand. He is a man of about forty, hair rather fair, with an eye of great penetrating powers.]

JUDGE [To Berns]. We will resume right where you left off yesterday. Kindly tell the Gentlemen of the Jury how the evidence which you turned over to the State came into your possession.

BERNS [Bowing to the Judge]. Quite by accident, your honor. I was acting as a waiter, trailing a gang of forgers in an East Side Café and heard the whole story from his own lips, heard him describe himself to his table companion as a living corpse, how he often passed the house where his wife and the other fellow are living, in fact, the whole story of how he fired a blank cartridge through a cap which he dropped into the water, and the rest of it.]

JUDGE [Emphatically]. But Petushkof, his companion, denies the story, stating that he knows nothing.

BERNS [Playfully]. This doesn't alter the case and the prisoner has already confessed to the police authorities.

JUDGE [Motioning him to retire]. This will do.

[Consulting typewritten paper before him].

Call Victor Karenin!...

USHER [In loud voice].

Victor Karenin.

[Enter Karenin walking up front to the place reserved for witnesses.]

[The ten years which have elapsed have made their imprint on him. He has raised a beard and looks stouter. One can see that the sorrow in his face is only a passing shadow, and that for the past ten years he has fared well.]

[As Karenin takes the stand facing audience, whispers are exchanged between the jurors and among the people in the spectators benches, but in a moment everything settles to deadly silence as the usher putting the thumb and two first fingers together picks up the Bible.]

USHER [To Karenin]. Raise your right arm in this way and repeat after me: "I promise and swear by the Almighty God, that I will state the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." [Karenin kisses the Bible].

[Usher replaces it to judge's table and exits.]

JUDGE [Reading from his papers]. "The People versus Karenin."

KARENIN [Indignantly]. What is my crime? I don't consider myself guilty of anything.

JUDGE [Pointedly]. You marreid a married woman.... [Pause]. Let us do it systematically... Your name?

KARENIN. Victor Karenin.

JUDGE. Occupation?

KARENIN. Attorney-at-law.

JUDGE. Age?

KARENIN. Thirty-eight. [Impatiently]. Never been accused or sued....

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [Sharply, with half closed eyes and cunning smile, as he rises to cross-question him.]

Did you know that Fedia Protosov was alive when you married his wife?

KARENIN [Emphatically]. I did not!... We were absolutely sure he was drowned...

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [Pointedly, moving the hand that holds the paper].

To whom did you send money in Boston after the false news of Protosov's death?

KARENIN [After a pause]. I refuse to answer...

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [Making a note of this reply.]

For what purpose did you send Protosov \$1,200 before his fake suicide of July 17th, ten years ago?

KARENIN. The money was turned over to me by my wife for her husband... [correcting himself] for her ex-husband...

DISTRICT ATTORNEY. This will do for the present.

JUDGE [Motioning him to a seat, not far from the secretary's table, inside the railing, Karenin taking it.]

[To usher.]

Call Mme. Karenin, or [playfully]... more correctly, Mme. Protosov...

USHER [Aloud.] Liza Protosov! [No response.]

[Confused—repeating] Liza Karenin-Protosov... Liza Protosov-Karenin...

[Liza comes forward heavily veiled and in black.]

JUDGE [Gallantly raising himself slowly and showing the whole of his graceful figure, then sitting down again.]

I regret the necessity of questioning you again... [emphatically]... but it is a necessity!...

[Looking at his papers from Liza, and from Liza to his papers.]

You have already been sworn in...[pause]...Compose yourself...You are within your rights not to answer questions, but in my opinion the truth will be best and more practical for all concerned...[Putting on an air of friendly solicitude and simplicity]. Tell us all about it. A free and full confession will be to your advantage...

LIZA [Plaintively]. I have nothing to hide!

JUDGE. So much the better...

[Showing his papers--inquiringly. Bending his head. Your name, and residence, everything is properly entered as you stated yesterday?...]

LIZA [Looking over the list]. Yes...

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [Rising as he cross-questions her].

You have two children, eight and three years old...[Pointedly]...both from...from your second marriage...from Karenin?

LIZA. Yes.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [Eying her]. You are accused that knowing your husband to be alive, you married another...

LIZA [Emphatically]. I did not know...

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [As above]. Also in this that you have persuaded your husband, bought him with money to manufacture a fake suicide which would set you free...

LIZA [Excitedly]. All this is false!...false!...and cowardly!...

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [Sharply]. Did you, or didn't you send him \$1,200 in July of that year?

LIZA [Plaintively]. It was his own money...the exact amount I obtained for his things. I have sent it when we were already parted and I expected my divorce...I had no right to that money...

DISTRICT ATTORNEY {Evidently pleased with the admission made}. The money was sent shortly before his disappearance.

LIZA [Confused]. I don't remember the date...

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [On what principle, on what ground did you recognize your husband's body in the corpse which the police had sent you to identify?

LIZA. I was so excited...so positive, that without looking at the body, I replied when they asked me...yes...I believe it is he...

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [Condescendingly]. Be it so...But why have you sent monthly money to Boston, the very city where your ex-husband lived?

LIZA [Plaintively]. My husband sent the money...[Pause]. I can say nothing about it...It is his secret; all I know is that it was not for Fedia...I can state positively that we did not consider him alive.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY Sympathetically]. We are servants of the law, but it does not interfere with our being human. [Cordially]. We understand the circumstances and sympathize with you, deeply and sincerely. [Trying to gain a point]. You were tied to a spendthrift, a falsifier...a...[Interrupted.]

LIZA [Sharply]. I loved him!

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [Cornered]. Naturally, you wanted your freedom and have chosen this simple way, not thinking that it leads to what is considered crime...to bigamy...I understand it, the jury will...and, therefore, I advise you to state everything.

LIZA [Crying]. I have told everything, have never lied, and have nothing to hide.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY. I would advise you to tell everything as it happened. Protosov has already confessed and will undoubtedly repeat it before the court. I would advise you...

KARENIN [Protestingly—rising in his seat]. I would advise you to keep strictly within the framework of your duties, and dispense with your personal advice...

JUDGE [Motioning Usher to stop him, which he does.]

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [To Judge]. I have no further questions, your honor, until I question Protosov in their presence, bring them together face to face, so to speak, and let him look them in the eye...

[To Liza]. It will give you a better chance to catch him telling a lie...

JUDGE [To Liza]. Please sit down. [To Usher]. Call FEDIA Protosov!...

USHER [Aloud]. Fedia Protosov!

[Enter Fedia. He looks twenty years older; is dressed neatly, but his clothes are very old, cheeks hollow, and the

general appearance that of a physical wreck. The sparks of a noble nature show up eloquently in all his movements and actions.]

FEDIA [A fierce struggle in his soul, to Liza on his knees before her.]

I am not to blame...I wanted to do it right, but if guilty, forgive me, forgive me! [Kissing the hem of her dress.]

[At a sign from the Judge, the Usher with wide open eyes runs up to Fedia, lifts him up and brings forward.]

USHER [Picks up Bible and is about to swear him in.]

FEDIA [Waving him aside]. I refuse to swear!... But [Raising his right hand]. I hereby affirm to state the truth, and nothing but the truth!...

[The Usher leaves at a waive of the hand from the Judge.]

JUDGE [To Fedia]. Your name?...

FEDIA. You know my name.

JUDGE [With a weary sigh at being obliged to repeat the same question]. Answer my question. [Glancing over a paper that lies before him]. I will not stand any nonsense.

FEDIA [Waving his hand]. Fedia Protosov.

JUDGE. Age?...

FEDIA [Irritated]. Ask what is important, not these stupidities!...

[PICTURE.]

JUDGE [Threateningly]. It is important! Answer my questions and be more careful in the wording of your replies!...

FEDIA [Impatiently, looking at the Judge with an expression of readiness in his eyes, while a fierce struggle goes on in his soul, casting a glance around the room]. I am a Russian noble...age 38...Doctor of Law...[Pause]...what else?

[During the proceedings, the Jurors whisper to each other, and make movements generally with their eyes, arms, etc.]

JUDGE [To Fedia]. Have you ever been tried before?

FEDIA [Softly]. No...never!

JUDGE [Lifting up a paper and replacing it.] Have you received a copy of the indictment?

FEDIA [His eyes fixed on the Judge] I have...[Sighing from time to time.]

[The District Attorney gets up, facing Fedia, ready for his prey.]

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [Eying him and the Karenins in turn]. Did Karenin and your wife know that you were alive, when you disappeared leaving your clothes on the bridge?

FEDIA [Emphatically—Eying Victor and Liza in turn]. No, they did not know!...I wanted to kill myself in earnest then...[pause]...well...his need not be told, the fact is, they knew nothing!...

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [Sharply]. You told a different story to the Police Inspector...

FEDIA [Reflectively]. Ah, the fellow who visited me in prison. I don't remember that I did...I am sober now and stating the whole truth. They knew nothing and believed me dead!...I was glad they did, and so it would have remained, were it not for Mr. Berns. If someone is to blame, I...I alone am guilty!...

JUDGE [Cordially]. I understand you want to be big-hearted, shield your companions and all that, but the law demands the truth...

DISTRICT ATTORNEY. Why was money sent to you? [Fedia silent]. [With greater emphasis]. You have received through Semonov the money which was sent to you to Boston. [Fedia silent]. Threateningly]. You refuse to answer. Very well, I will answer for you...Your honor and [turning to jury] Gentlemen of the Jury, ten years ago on the 17th of this month a fake suicide was committed by the Prisoner, Fedia Protosov, for the purpose of legalizing a marriage between the prisoner's wife and Victor Karenin, who has just testified...[pause]...On inquiry it was learned that the said Fedia Protosov received \$1,200 from Mr. Karenin, a short time before his disappearance. [Eyeing the judge and jury in turn]. In other words, the prisoner accepted a bribe of \$1,200 for outwitting the Law and outraging the conscience of society...[pointing to numerous law-books on his table]. There are 47 clauses in 47 different law-books on my table, which with your honors permission I would like to read to the jury, each and every one of them pointing to a conviction and a penalty of imprisonment for him and his wife...

FEDIA [Bitterly] Mr. District Attorney!...Aren't you ashamed to intrude so boldly with your heavy boots into the life of another...Glad that you have the power, you torture mentally and physically people who are a thousand times your superior.

[His face growing serious and severe, a strange feeling of loathing, mingled with suffering aroused within him]. On my word, and on my honor, I have never received a cent from them which did not rightly belong to me...But [turning to jury and eying the District Attorney] it's quite natural that a man who sells himself to prosecute people, day in and day out, all the year round, could not comprehend a human action which had no monetary return as its foundation...[The District Attorney gets red in the face].

JUDGE:—[To Fedia, angrily]. I will overlook your first offense, but a repetition of personalities will make you liable for Contempt of Court!...

FEDIA [Boldly]. He started it, and your threats are meaningless to me...[pause]...you can't frighten into falling out of bed a man who is lying on the floor...[pause]...don't apologize...I will have my say...Nothing can make my condition worse...

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [Cunningly]. I am glad he estimates rightly his prospects for acquittal, and I rather like his outbursts, since it gives the jury an opportunity to see the kind of criminal they have to deal with...Now, with your honors permission, I would like the jury to examine the articles in evidence...

JUDGE [Quietly]. Motion sustained.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [Getting the cap and pistol from the Judges table, inviting the jury to examine them. Both of the above articles have seals and labels attached to them.] [The foreman rising in his seat, taking the cap and revolver from the District Attorney, the articles are passed on until they reach the twelfth juror, and by him returned again to the foreman, then to the District Attorney.]

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [To Fedia, sardonically]. Where did the blood on the cap come from? Unlike Joseph's coat, I have sent it to a laboratory, had the blood tested and found that it was human blood!...

FEDIA. I will say no more.

JUDGE [Leaning forward]. Leaving out the blood incident, which after all is trivial, and practically immaterial, do you plead guilty on all other counts? [Lifting the Indictment before him with a graceful movement of the hand, and replacing it again to its former position.]

FEDIA [Looking at the Judge and jury in turn]. I deny thoroughly and absolutely the complicity of either Mr. Karenin

or Liza in my act, all other evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. The power of the State is always exercised against the rights of the individual, I expect no justice at your hands and regard your sessions and examinations as unnecessary formalities. But I want it known that I was prompted by no other motive but that of seeing those who are dear to me happy. [Pause]...It is not I, but your stupid laws which are on trial. Marriage is a business contract regulated by law, not a sacrament.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [Rising]. Gentlemen of the jury...[with half crossed eyes and a cunning smile]...you have heard the prisoner's admission of his act. The fate of society is largely in your hands, your verdict will influence it. Help us to keep down lawlessness and immorality of this kind. Grasp the full meaning of this crime, the danger that awaits society from this man and men like him, and help us guard the innocent and strong elements of society from contagion and infection. In the name of social purity I implore you to show this lawbreaker no mercy. [Sinks in his chair, highly delighted with his own speech.]

JUDGE [To jury, pleasantly]. In summing up, let me say that if you find the prisoner guilty, you have the right to specify the degree of guilt, guilty on one count, or guilty on the other. Guilty for trying to evade the law, but not guilty on the question of pecuniary gain. If not guilty, you may give the verdict of not guilty, but the right to re-marry is taken away from the prisoner by the court, irrespective of your decision. On all other counts, the decision rests entirely with you...This right is given to you, but you should use it with reason and in accord with the best dictates of your conscience. Your answers are to affirm everything included in a given question. If you don't wish to affirm the whole question, mention the part of the question you wish to be accepted. You are the conscience of society, use your rights, but don't abuse them.

[As the jurors are about to rise]. One moment, the prisoner remarked that he expects no mercy at your hands, and his mind is evidently so embittered that he refused the services of counsel which was repeatedly offered to him by the court as his right and without cost...[Plaintively]... Whatever views a man may hold on given questions and social regeneration, some form of government being necessary for the present, I can't think of a better and more rea-

sonable method than the jury system. [The jurors rise]. I want the prisoner to remember that no opportunity to plead was denied him...For this reason, I will make an exception to the rule and give the prisoner the final word! [The jurors reseat themselves and silence reigns as Fedia gets up.]

FEDIA [Realizing his opportunity, taking advantage of it, eyeing the jurors.] Your honor and Gentlemen of the jury. Appreciating the privilege extended to me by His Honor, let me emphasize first that my act was voluntary. It was not called forth by monetary returns or any other material consideration. [Concentrating his gaze on the foreman]. I want you to consider the conditions which forced me to commit this act. [Gesticulating]. It was not consummated out of love for trickery and homage to falsehood, but in self-defence, and as a protest against the abominable divorce laws and conditions which are forced upon all respectable people.

For heaven's sake, why should one make eternal the hell whose torments are as varied as they are overwhelming? Why should not reason correct the mistakes of chance, miscalculation and deceived hopes? Why should men and women, who live together in misunderstanding, continue to suffer agonies which are worse than death? What worse state of existence can there be than being tied together body and soul in hatred and scorn?

Mine was a declaration of independence nailed to the wall of social prejudice as neatly and as noiselessly as I could do it! It was the fact that I was acting for moral righteousness that gave me the necessary courage [Whispers among the jurors]. [In a somewhat lower tone]. The three of us found our relations complicated, delicate, and there ensued a spiritual struggle. Under the conditions already known to you, the struggle was ended and all were satisfied. They were happy cherishing my memory. In my down fall I was glad to have done the correct thing, that the good-for-nothing that I am, have stepped aside from life and happiness in order not to interfere with them who are good and so full of life ...And we all lived, lived peaceably without interfering with others. Suddenly the police learns my secret and turns me over to the champions of law and morality, who receiving a monthly allowance for their work, could not possibly conceive the idea of leaving others in peace...[eying the District Attorney]...To satisfy his ambition which consists of getting a conviction every time he prosecutes, irrespective

of the guilt or innocence of the accused, the District Attorney will not rest until he has sent me to prison, broken up Liza's home, ruined her life and that of her husband, making social outcasts of their children. He will not be satisfied until he has drowned us in mud and blood, all for his personal ambition, which he chooses to nickname morality, law and order.

[The District Attorney makes a movement to interfere, but is checked by a waive of the hand from the Judge]. But what is my crime?...what am I tried for?...I will tell you...[Taking a long breath]. My crime is that I did not commit suicide, that my act did not have the loss of life as its consequence, an act which is regarded as equally criminal by church and state!...Gentlemen, I appeal to your manhood, to your broad humanity!...[Sits down]. [Sensation].

[The jurors talk in whispers, then leave their seats, one by one, and exit to the hall. All others remain in their seats, consulting their watches, whispering, etc.]

JUDGE [To Usher and District Attorney]. While the court is waiting, will you kindly see if the witnesses and attorneys are ready for the next case.

USHER [Inquiringly]. And that is?

JUDGE [Consulting his papers]. The People versus Alexandrove, for an attempt at suicide. [The sound of a bell behind the scenes.]

DISTRICT ATTORNEY [Jumping to his feet]. Your honor, all the evidence for the prosecution is complete. The man has confessed and I have here twenty-three different paragraphs in twenty-three different sections...[pointing to his books]...[Interrupted by the entry of the foreman of jurors who hands a paper to the Judge.]

JUDGE [Reading from the paper]. The jury regrets the incident, but convinced that no past misdeed could be rectified by committing a new crime, recommends the legal annulment of the first marriage and renders the verdict of *not guilty*. [Lifting his eyes from the paper]. Not guilty!...

[Applause and general rejoicing from all over the room, there is an inroad to shake Fedia by the hand, and the air is filled with the voices of frantic men and women, waiving hats and handkerchiefs, and crying FEDIA!...FEDIA!...FEDIA! AS THE CURTAIN FALLS.

“The Compromising Photo.”

A PLAY FROM MODERN AMERICAN LIFE

By A. B. EBIN.

Author of “Arbitration,” “Roosevelt,” “Fedia,” “Portia in Politics,” “Marriageables,” etc., etc.

1. John Callman
Millionaire politician and head of banking trust—age 55.
 3. Monimad Springmeyer, Callman's Secretary, age 33.
 4. Henry Blank, a young lawyer, age 25.
 5. Charley, Callman's office assistant, age 20.
 6. Gorilla, Springmeyer's underworld protege, age 40.
 7. *Kitty Williams adopted daughter.*
-

TIME—The Present.

PLACE—Any large city in America—

Mr. Callman's private office.

"The Compromising Photo."

Mr. Callman's private office, in a modern office building:
A large spacious room in very good taste, architecturally and otherwise.

Doors L. U. E., R. U. E., and left of centre.

Large flat top desk C., revolving chair near it, two other chairs at its sides.

Telephone, flowers and other little ornaments both sides of inkstand, C.

A smaller desk, that of his Secretary on the right, revolving chair near it. A pigeonhole letter-box for domestic distribution on the left above it. Safe of the latest model near wall L. Map of the United States on wall above it. Portraits of prominent Americans both sides of map and wall R.

The room is empty as the curtain rises.

[Enter Charley R. U. E. with two sets of documents and several unopened letters, fingering the letters he reads the names of their senders in the L hand side of envelopes, then placing them unopened on Springmeyer's desk with one set of documents, placing the other on the President's desk.]

Enter Springmeyer, L. C. He is the born Secretary; smooth face, rather long, regular features. His clothes are faultless and in the latest style.

[Charley, taking out the letters with his right hand, replacing them to his left.]

SPRINGMEYER [Handing him a number of telegrams]. See that they are dispatched immediately.

[Exit Charley, taking letters and telegrams with him.]

[Springmeyer busies himself with opening letters brought by Charley, leaving most of them on his own desk, taking some to the Presidents' desk, which he places C., as the telephone bell rings.]

[At phone.] I cannot definitely accept your invitation. I will place it before the President at the first opportune moment and communicate to you his decision.

[Enter Charley, handing Springmeyer a reporters card.]

[Springmeyer, eyeing Charley and card in turn.] Tell the Reporter that as a courtesy to the Investigating Committee Mr. Callman does not intend to make any further public statements for an indefinite time. [Exit Charley.]

[The phone rings again—Springmeyer at phone.] The President hasn't had time to take up your matter—try again next month.

Your last letter? Well, there are thousands of other letters just as important to their senders which are ahead of yours—you must await your turn. Who is this?...Mr. Leace of the State Repubocrat Committee? I was just going to call you up!...Mr. Callman wants you to book him as usual, \$50,000 a piece for each of his companies—his regular subscription...What?...It is very kind of Mr. Callman,...well, he doesn't mind a little thing like this...under your unequalled protection methods he adds one percent more to our commission charges and gets it all back again in no time. I will mail you his check just as soon as I can get at the cashier to make it out, and at Mr. Callman to sign it...Yes, yes, Mr. Leace, positively! By the by your assistant promised to send me one of his faithful gorillas for a neat and urgent piece of work to be done immediately! [pause] What? he should be in my office by now?...Good! I will inquire [looking about.] Good bye!...[Hangs up receiver.]

Enter Gorilla. [He is a man of about forty; eccentric dress and mannerism, showing his past crime record in his face; speaks with an accent. A physical and mental degenerate, the vilest product of the country and the times.]

GORILLA [Displaying a badge under his coat.] Mr. Spri—Mr. Springmeyer—I has been sent 'ere by "*The National Crime Assacion*" for a neat, quick job to be done, as I understands it, to remove some re-former, or such insect.

SPRINGMEYER [Convincing himself first that the badge is O. K., then harking at the doors to reassure himself that they are not over-heard.] Yes, there is a national curiosity [sneeringly and emphatically]. *An honest lawyer*, whom we could not afford to try legally and who should be removed at once [emphatically] at once, you understand.

GORILLA [Making wild gestures, etc.] Oh!...I jes loves me works!...[Animatedly.] An de price, de price...

SPRINGMEYER [Placing his hands on Gorilla's shoulder as he hands him a cigar. The price, the price comrade, is all right...I understand that your regular consultation fees are a thousand dollars. [Gorilla nods head in approval.] Well, friend, we will double it [taking out pocketbook and handing him some bills.] Here is five hundred on account, the rest will be paid over to you *right here*, the moment the job is done [nudging him]. Do you get me comrade?

GORILLA [All smiles.] I'se wise, I'se wise! [Examining the money and counting it with feverish excitement.]

[The telephone bell rings.]

SPRINGMEYER [His hand on gorilla's shoulder.] Wait in the next room friend, until I give you the signal—I will not keep you long. [Exit Gorilla.] [Springmeyer takes up receiver.]

Who is this? [pause] Ah—this is Miss Kitty...Yes, my dear... Father telephoned yesterday afternoon that he would be rather late... I know, it was I who telephoned, yes...You are worried for he has not shown up at all. [Knowingly.] There is no cause for alarm... about Mr. Callman. He has been at an all night conference with other men of great affairs who are devising means and ways for checking the wholesale investigations...What...you are coming over...good...always glad to see you!...[Replacing receiver.]

[Enter John Callman. He is about 55. Expressive play of features; physical and moral passions strongly marked; a clear eye, a fine brow, and forehead, the stouthearted captain of a great band of merry money makers].

[Glancing hurriedly through the letters placed on his desk by Springmeyer].

CALLMAN [Drinking water, repeatedly mopping his face with a handkerchief.] Any further news from the Investigating Committee? What is their latest discovery? [Showing the strain under which he is laboring.] Laterly it seems that the public actually lives on investigation sensations.

SPRINGMEYER. Our activity in connection with farming out public funds to favored banks seems to be the hardest for them to digest... [Reading from printel leaflet.] "The Superintendents of Banks of this and other States should be forced to perform their duties." Yes, the Investigating Committee is revealing something of the situation, but so far they are only nibbling around the edges.

CALLMAN [Heling himself freely to ice water.] These all night meetings, cross-examinations, and wholesale onslaught of the Press are telling upon me. They make me fear the possibilities of sudden death. [Pause] That reminds me...Take out my last Will, I want to examine it again, it might want some touching up.

SPRINGMEYER [Alarmed, as he proceeds to open the safe.] You haven't changed your mind, Mr. Callman, about making Kitty heir as I believe he is. But [emphatically] if at any time it is established that to your fortune?

CALLMAN [Thoughtfully.] No, not if my own child is really dead, I believe he is. But [emphatically] if at any time it is established that he is alive, then the bulk of my fortune goes to him.

[Taking the will from Mr. Springmeyer who had by now opened the safe and produced the desired document.] It is to make this point clear that I want to consult the will again. [Glancing through the document carefully].

SPRINGMEYER [Cunningly.] You told me, if I remember correctly, that your wife and child were killed nearly twenty years ago

during an Indian uprising in the plains of the West, shortly after you left the East as a poor man, to win fortune for them... Do you believe in the return of the dead?

CALLMAN [Absorbed in thought]. Only the body of my dead wife was found. During all these years I failed to obtain exact information about the child.

[Enter Kitty in out-of-door clothes.]

[Kitty is 18, bright, intelligent, rather fair, free and easy manner; everything about her bristles with youth and life.]

KITTY [As she perceives Callman in his usual place, removing her glove]. So glad to find you in.

CALLMAN [Rising to receive her and kissing her]. Ah, [pointing to will in his hand] here comes the sole executrix of this precious little document.

SPRINGMEYER [Playfully]. I am sure you will survive us all, Mr. Callman. Men of your abundant vitality should be ashamed to talk about dying.

KITTY. He is quite right! Why talk of dying when all around, everything, everywhere bristles with life and fun? [Laughing.]

Even Springmeyer is taking on a new lease on life; he actually proposed to me—*yesterday*.

CALLMAN [His hand on Springmeyer's shoulder]. Springmeyer is my closest friend in the company and is very acceptable to me, but it is yourself with whom, after all, the decisive answer rests.

[Aside to Kitty—bidding for sympathy.] I control the savings of our people to all practical purposes as if they were my own. [Ephatically.] It is my own, if only, if only I could keep my important assistants and associates in the family. [Sighs.] How happy I would be if I had children of my own.

KITTY [Sympathetically]. I feel for you, father, but I don't love Mr. Springmeyer.

[The telephone bell rings. Springmeyer takes up receiver, repeating.]

SPRINGMEYER. All members of the Finanee Committee are in the Committee Room waiting for the president.

CALLMAN [As he exits, holding Springmeyer by the hand]. I shall be very joyful to hear that she accepted you, but you will have to do your own courting and winning and get her consent first.

SPRINGMEYER [Attempting to take Kitty by the hand, affectionately, in low tone]. Those who love the most, know the least how to express it, and this is exactly my case.

KITTY [Playfully]. You have evidently forgotten that this is your second proposal since yesterday.

SPRINGMEYER [Holding her L hand, admiringly]. What a dainty little hand! What a beautiful work of nature! [Looking persistently at her.] Could any artist reproduce those lively, and pleasing eyes, which flash like stars and your smile [noticing that she is solemn]; oh, do smile, Miss Kitty.

KITTY [Distantly]. You have taken me by surprise, Mr. Springmeyer. I really didn't know that outside of heaping dollars upon dollars, you had eyes for anything.

SPRINGMEYER [Aggressively]. Who could remain indifferent in the presence of a daughter of the gods, so graceful, so refined and so divinely fair!

KITTY [Playfully]. Springmeyer and love making! Excuse me . . . I can't get quite accustomed to it, to me it sounds like poetry from a sphinx.

SPRINGMEYER [Earnestly]. I have always been and always will be your devoted lover, most passionate admirer—and—in your power . . . [in a lower voice] Mr. Callman is quite agreeable . . . anxious in fact.

KITTY [Complainingly]. This was a mistake on your part. Had you consulted me first, I would have saved you all the trouble.

SPRINGMEYER. You mean that you woud have accepted me at once . . . [Joyous.] I knew it, I was sure of it all the time . . . [Makes movement towards her.]

KITTY [Distantly]. No, no, certainly not, had you asked me, I would have told you that my affections are placed elsewhere. My life tour is already booked.

SPRINGMEYER [Aroused]. If you refer to Henry Blank [sneeringly] the boy lawyer, you might as well know that he has been fired from the company, and financially, compared with me, well [proudly], he practically doesn't exist.

KITTY [Her feelings hurt]. Now when you talk dollars, you are yourself again, Mr. Springmeyer. [Rising abruptly.] You will please leave Henry, [correcting herself], Mr. Blank, out of your future conversations.

SPRINGMEYER. Don't be angry with me, Miss Kitty, I love you and will love you always until my death and after, [looking persistently at her], but I want you to know that Mr. Callman is dead sore at the way your Mr. Blank has been going on of late.

KITTY [Inquiringly]. You refer to his becoming an attorney for the Investigating Committee. Well, what can I do?

SPRINGMEYER [Instructively]. Take my advice and warn him of the dangers and difficulties of the hail-stoney road he has set himself to travel.

KITTY [Playfully]. Thank you, Mr. Springmeyer, I will certainly speak to Henry; it is not for him to attack father.

SPRINGMEYER [Gallantly]. My dear, charming Miss Kitty, tell him what is more to the point and purpose, tell him that he is opposing the greatest power on earth, and that so far, anyone who attempted to do anything which was contrary to what this power allows, found himself surrounded by unsurmountable obstacles.

[Enter Charley with card, handing it to Springmeyer.]

SPRINGMEYER [Pointing to card]. I have sent for your Mr. Blank, and he is here! . . .

KITTY. I am glad he called. Let us hope that you will come to an understanding without the unpleasant necessity of *my* speaking to him about it. [Moves to exit.]

SPRINGMEYER [Detaining her]. Please remain. [To Charley.] Ask Mr. Blank in. [Exit Charley.]

[Enter Henry Blank.] [He is dark and rather tall. A shrewd face, showing determination and will.]

KITTY [Greeting Henry cordially]. Hello, Henry.

HENRY [Greeting her in return, then indignantly to Springmeyer]. I had no idea that I was sent for to meet Miss Kitty.

KITTY [Reassuring]. My presence here, Henry, is purely accidental.

HENRY [Eyeing Kitty and Springmeyer in turn]. I have never known Springmeyer to trust anything to chance.

SPRINGMEYER. I have sent for you, Mr. Blank, on behalf of Mr. Callman to ascertain what you are doing as the figurehead of an Investigating Committee.

HENRY [Proudly]. Working for the people, for right to replace might.

SPRINGMEYER [Plaintively]. You can't say we haven't always done what the true conditions permitted us to do.

HENRY [Artfully]. Indeed you have, no tyrant could possibly have done more.

KITTY [Unnerved]. Henry!

HENRY [Leisurely]. Oh, I am not afraid of him, the humblest person, fighting for a righteous cause is stronger than all the hosts of error.

KITTY [Soothingly—petting him]. I know that the loss of your position has hit you hard and in more ways than one, but learn to control yourself [pleadingly] for my sake. I hope you will make it up by the time I return. [Exit.]

SPRINGMEYER [Assuring himself that they are alone]. You are bold, Mr. Blank! Entirely apart from the Callmans, have you

figured the consequences if you continue to attack us? We are the power in politics; our wish is law and our rule unquestioned.

HENRY [Self-confident]. Frankly speaking, I don't care a rap what the consequences may be. I have a duty to perform to the people which is paramount to all others. You don't know the iron that has been driven into me all these years.

SPRINGMEYER [Playfully]. If you are only seeking to serve the people, let me prove to you that your so-called Committees can only cause great losses to the people's interests. Take my advice and drop it.

HENRY. No, I intend to stay on the firing line. I know the facts and things as they are; the damage to the people will be much greater if I refrain from doing what I decided to do, than by my doing it. I feel it incumbent on me to do all I can to secure the reforms in which I heartily believe. It is for you that the time has come to beat a hasty retreat.

[Enter Callman. Taking in the situation at a glance, eyeing Blank and offering hand, Henry taking it.]

CALLMAN. Well, well, if it isn't my old protege, Henry Blank! [Offering cigar, Henry refusing it.] I am mighty glad to see you!

SPRINGMEYER [Cunningly]. Mr. Blank is the active legal head on the new Committee for reform. [Sarcastically.] Mr. Blank is the new champion of the people.

CALLMAN [Artfully]. I am mighty glad to hear it. The interest of the people is paramount and always has been my first consideration. Under my administration everything is being settled on the basis of equity and justice to the people, first, last and all the time. If Mr. Blank has something new to suggest which will serve the people's interests, he may count on my co-operation now and always.

[Springmeyer lingering behind.]

HENRY [Cunningly, taking out papers from his breast pocket]. What a pity, Mr. Callman, that your big words mean so little. Let us surmise the facts [pointing to papers in his hand]. I hold judgments against you in favor of the State for over half a million dollars, you having acted as bondsman for practically all the State Treasurers who deposited the public funds without interest in banks which you have chosen. Now, this being a pioneer case for the enforcement of correct principle in the discharge of duty regarding the custody of trust funds, I will see to it that the judgment is collected.

CALLMAN [His pocketbook in left hand and roll of money in the right]. This is an awfully important case to me and I cannot afford to lose it. It costs me considerable anxiety. [Extending right hand.] Now, Mr. Blank, I don't want to hire you as my attorney, but I will

give you a thousand dollars now and five thousand more when this judgment is shelved and the Courts decide the case right. [Offering the money.]

HENRY [Excitedly, making a movement towards him, knocking the money out of his hand]. You couldn't insult me more, Mr. Callman, if you struck me in the face or on the head. You don't want to employ me as your attorney—you simply want to bribe me [pause]. Well, I am not for sale! . . . You haven't money enough to stay my hand, and incidentally, I may mention that this is not the only case of financial irregularities which I have against you.

CALLMAN [Bending down and picking up the money. Replacing money in right-hand pocket]. [Abruptly.] Spare me the details of your great financial discoveries. [Replacing pocketbook in L. H. pocket.] I have been identified with financial matters before you were born, and I am not asking you or anybody how to run my business.

HENRY [Emphatically]. I know, know it but too well. I have made up my mind that I would do all in my power to defeat you and am doing it. Springmeyer has been threatening me, but I will follow my course wherever it might lead me. During your term of administration great injustice has been done to the public, and it is time to call a halt.

CALLMAN [Facing him]. What do you purpose to do?

HENRY [Earnestly]. I intend to expose your deviltry; let the public see the wrongs you have wrought and halt your greed. [Raising his right hand.] You have made public office a stepping stone to great financial success, heaping dollars upon dollars until the pile dazzles one.

You have made government committees acting upon legislation, graveyards of all bills designed to give the people a fair show in their dealings with your companies, and the fortunes which you squander annually represent the blood and tears, the sweat and brawn of millions.

[Walking to and fro.] Let us contrast all this with your brazen profession of virtue. [Banging the table.] The government clerks at the Banking Department are elected direct from your office at salaries ten times their earning capacity or value.

[Springmeyer, making signs to Callman unseen by Henry, as he exits.]

You have filled all important places in your companies with your personal friends and relatives, the salary list reaching into millions!

Now, Mr. Callman, *yesterday* you loomed before the American public as the greatest, most respected, and most venerable man in our broad land, tomorrow your name will stand for everything that is

tricky, fraudulent and oppressive. *Yesterday*, even I mistook you for an honest man, a mistake for which I offer an apology, tomorrow the world will know you as the man drunk with power, infamy, and abomination.

Tomorrow with a mask, bag and dark lantern, you will stand out so clearly before the world for what you are, that you could not escape the consequences of your past misdeeds, nor commit new ones.

Tomorrow I will bring about the restitution of the vast amounts of money which in the past you have appropriated from the public funds for your private use and show you up as a criminal.

I will drag you out of your Wall Street conservatory and show how you administered a most sacred trust.

[Banging his fist on Callman's desk.]

Tomorrow, before the Investigating Committee, I will set you up in the plain white light of day. [Banging repeated.] Tomorrow, before the whole world, I will ask you publicly [pause] John Callman, for your resignation! . . .

CALLMAN [Speechless, motionless, remains standing as if struck by lightning; then regaining his composure he picks up Henry's hat, handing it to him gallantly and shows him out of the office through door C.] without a word.

[Goes to table, drinking water rapidly.]

This is democracy! . . . A mushroom lawyer telling me how to run my business and asking for my resignation! . . . A mere boy dares to speak to me like this in my own office, and I am powerless, helpless. I, John Callman, Empire builder! [Collapses in his chair.]

[Enter Springmeyer.]

SPRINGMEYER [Jubilant]. It's done! I've done it! I have fixed this "Red" so that he can't do us further harm. . . . He stumbled over the Gorilla's foot in the hall, knocked his head against the steel railing of the stairway and fell unconscious to the very bottom of the stairs.

[Enter Gorilla and Charley, carrying Henry who is unconscious and bleeding. Henry's left temple is badly cut, the blood streaming down his clothes and collar. Charley supporting Henry under his arms, holding his head on his chest, nervous and upset.]

CHARLEY [Excitedly]. This man is unconscious, where shall I put him?

SPRINGMEYER [Nervous and excited]. Not in here, you block-head, not in here . . . [Annoyed]. Oh, Charley, how could you be so stupid!

[As his eyes meet that of Gorilla his expression changes. Gorilla holds out his hand and Springmeyer shaking it hands him a bankroll, unnoticed by the others.]

[Exit Gorilla.]

[Charley is about to exit.]

Wait . . . Wait . . .

[He quickly searches Henry's pockets, relieving him of his belongings consisting of large leather pocketbook, watch and chain, pen, pencil, some money, etc., replacing money, etc., to former places, but retaining pocketbook.]

[To Charley.] You are very careless, Charley.

CHARLEY [Letting go of Henry, placing him on chair, falling on his knees before Springmeyer]. For God's sake, Mr. Springmeyer, Mr. Springmeyer, you wouldn't tell, you wouldn't tell that I did it. You wouldn't allow them to arrest me for murder? I swear, I swear to you that I haven't done it.

[Fixing his gaze on Henry, who lies unconscious before him; his R. knee up, and Left down.]

SPRINGMEYER. [To Charley.] Quit, you blockhead! Take him to the Committee Room, fill him up with whiskey from within and his clothes from without. Cut his trousers so that he looks more like a tramp than a gentleman; then remove him to the corridor in the rear; keep your mouth shut, and await further orders.

[Tearing Henry's clothing, tie and collar.]

[Charley makes an attempt to lift Henry in his arms, but overcome by the weight and fright as he looks into his victim's face, he lets go of Henry, who unconscious as before, drops into the chair again. Charley, unnerved, covering up his face with his hands.]

[Picture.]

[Springmeyer comes forward lifting Henry, assisted by Charley, Henry's face toward the audience as Charley places his arms into Henry's from behind, lifting him on his back, Springmeyer assisting until they are out of sight.] [Callman tapping his hands and walking about unnerved and uneasy.]

[Returning to his desk agitated and excited, Springmeyer takes up receiver] . . . Central, give me Police Headquarters, yes, urgent. Captain, this is Springmeyer of the Secret Service . . . There has been an accident near our building . . . I want the party removed to a hospital and the affair kept out of the daily papers . . . See that reliable men only are sent with the ambulance . . . Hurry! I don't want the man to die here . . . nor at the hospital during the first day of his arrival. No, I don't

want an operating chair prepared, but within a reasonable time you may order a grave dug and charge the expense to me. You will attend to it immediately, good! [Hangs up receiver.]

CALLMAN. This may or may not prove to be the proper move . . . with all the newspapers heralding our lack of equity, it was hardly, timely . . . to commit murder!

SPRINGMEYER [Retreating]. If we see fit we may allow the man to recover a few months hence. Besides, John Callman has no one to fear! . . .

CALLMAN. True, we must instantly and at any cost squelch the rash souls who cross our paths.

SPRINGMEYER. When I saw a mere boy calling at our headquarters and demanding your resignation, the resignation of John Callman, the master of the people's savings, I could stand it no longer! . . . There was no time to lose. I told the Gorilla that this man's activity must be stopped at once, and he understood what I meant and what was expected.

CALLMAN [Deeply touched—pressing his hand]. At this critical moment of my career, you proved more than ever your extraordinary devotion to me and shall be rewarded accordingly.

[Coming up closely and touching him on the shoulder.]

Kitty shall be your wife, I will make it so.

[Excitedly.] I will send you on a supposedly business trip to Europe at the earliest possible moment to visit our European agencies. Kitty will start on a pleasure trip shortly afterwards. [Confidentially.] You will meet in London, Paris, Rome, and there amidst the beauty of art and nature, away from all other disturbing elements and influences, victory will only be a question of time.

SPRINGMEYER [Confidently]. True, there it will be a landslide.

CALLMAN [Picking up Henry's leather pocketbook, opening it and displaying several documents]. "The Secrets of the Investigating Committee at a Glance"; [changing to another page] "The Proposed Reforms"; [coughing—then turning over the page] "The New Administration." [Folding them and replacing to pocketbook.] With this in our possession, we beat them to a frazzle! We lick them good and hard, down and out! [Laughing, holding up the folded pocketbook in his hand.] Oh, my young colt, you and your Committee will soon learn what it means to cross the path of John Callman!

SPRINGMEYER [With his eyes on the pocketbook, gives a sphinx-like smile]. I am sorry, Mr. Callman, but it had to be done, self-preservation is the first law of nature.

CALLMAN [Inquiringly—slightly touching him]. Will he die?

SPRINGMEYER [Full of meaning]. That depends . . .

CALLMAN [Thoughtfully]. I hope not, for your sake. If he dies and his people find it out, they will see to it that you are arrested . . . as an accomplice in murder!

SPRINGMEYER [Quickly]. I am not afraid of such fry, but . . . I fear Miss Kitty . . . She loves this dog! . . .

CALLMAN. I would like to see Blank's face when he reads the names of his prospects on our lists. [Sitting next to each other, both closing their eyes, trying to find each others arms as an expression of mutual understanding.]

SPRINGMEYER [Jubilant, digging into Callman's ribs]. The best part of the joke is that among his belongings in the pocketbook I have found the photograph of a woman! . . . [Smiling broadly.] I need hardly tell you that this is the easiest channel through which to hit out at this fellow. [Embracing each other in honor of their victory.]

CALLMAN [Reflectively, after a pause]. But after all my friend, he is a single man . . .

SPRINGMEYER [Quickly]. He is, but the woman isn't! . . . [Smiling broadly.] Her child is on the photo with her . . . [Pause.] It will not take our detectives long to get her name and address, as to the rest, if we don't get any real evidence, we can manufacture it as easily.

CALLMAN [With profound admiration]. They may boast as much as they please about trust manipulation, but when it comes to getting something for nothing, and making the other fellow the blackguard, there isn't a man among them who could beat you, George! . . . The pocketbook is a lasting monument for your integrity . . . the pocketbook is certainly *some* find! . . .

SPRINGMEYER [Boastfully]. The poekctbook is our salvation. It is the supply train which was indispensable for our organization to work on. With it, Mr. Blank's defeat is assured . . .

[Enter Charley.]

CHARLEY [More composed, to Springmeyer who is all expectations]. The whiskey revived him! . . . but I communicated with the hospital and have their assurance that Henry Blank will be kept there as long as our immediate needs may require it . . . Dr. X. is worth his weight in gold in such cases.

CALLMAN [Gratified]. Good!

[Exit Charley.] [Enter Kitty.]

KITTY [Her bosom heaving, her face haggard, her hair in disorder, looking daggers at both men]. I saw him, saw him unconscious in the next room, saw the blood streaming from his forehead on his face and clothes! . . . Oh, it's awful and all for no other reason but because he has shown a liking for me! . . . Oh, father, father, how could you be so cruel! . . .

CALLMAN [Hesitatingly]. It was rather hasty, I confess, but I was not my doing! . . .

SPRINGMEYER [Plaintively]. If you must know the truth, I confess. It was on your account, Miss Kitty. He was trying to compromise you while paying his addresses to a certain married woman all the time! We couldn't tolerate such insolence to you. Something had to be done and quickly! . . . It was an insult to our manhood . . . and I . . . I . . . [interrupted].

KITTY [Enraged, her bosom heaving]. It's a damnable lie!

[To Springmeyer.] Oh, you monster of stone! tradesman of infamy! and character assassinator, your entire business success rests on it . . .

SPRINGMEYER [Excitedly]. I demand an apology . . . I have proofs.

KITTY [Defiant]. Produce it! . . . [Sardonically.] Springmeyer's proofs are old lies, recapitalized.

SPRINGMEYER [Displaying photo, then handing it to her].
There! . . .

KITTY [Taking photo, indignantly]. Why, this is a photo of himself when a boy, together with his mother! . . .

[Turning photo over to Callman.] See for yourself, father, can't you recognize the features and resemblances.

CALLMAN [Taking photo, gasping inarticulately]. [Aside.] My dear, dead wife, my poor, poor child . . . [Chokes.] It . . . it is . . .

KITTY [Confused]. God! . . . What have I done?

CALLMAN. Give me some water. I am choking! . . . [His left hand to his collar, gasping for breath, Springmeyer and Kitty both run to his assistance.]

KITTY [Glass of water in her hand, sprinkling his face]. Father! Father! . . .

SPRINGMEYER. Mr. Callman!

CALLMAN [Reviving]. My boy! . . . He is my long-lost son, my boy, my darling boy! . . .

[The noise of an arriving hospital ambulance is heard. Callman, excitedly to Kitty.]

Go to the surgeon, child, go to him and tell him . . . tell him he can have my fortune if only, if only he can save my boy, save him, save him! . . . [Collapses, looking daggers at Springmeyer.]

[Exit Kitty hurriedly.]

SPRINGMEYER [Watching Callman's expression]. Kitty at this boy's bedside and I powerless! . . . [To Callman.] I am tempted to hand in my resignation, Mr. Callman! . . . It was I who handed you the interesting photo, I who brought you together again, but you don't look grateful—not a bit grateful, after all I have done for you! . . . and for him.

CALLMAN [Assuming a more pleasant attitude]. Your self-sacrifice on behalf of my son is affecting, but I wouldn't be in a hurry to resign, if I were you. A business man of your type should be quick to adjust himself to storms he cannot control, trimming his sails to meet any emergency.

SPRINGMEYER [Betraying no emotion]. After all it is the interests of the people which are paramount. For their sake, I am setting aside all personal considerations. I will stay, I will stay.

[Enter Kitty and Henry.]

[Henry's left temple is bandaged, and on the whole, he looks the part.]

KITTY [Excitedly]. He knows all! . . .

CALLMAN [Aroused, advancing towards Henry]. My boy, my darling son—

HENRY [Holding Callman at a respectful distance with a cold reception in look and gesture]. For years, hungry, thirsty, in rags and alone, have I traveled the country in search of my father, and now that I have found you, I could do nothing else but disown you! . . . unless, unless . . .

CALLMAN [Eagerly, renewing his efforts]. Unless, unless—say it, my boy, say it!

HENRY. Unless you reform and atone for all the wrongs you have done.

CALLMAN [Succeeding in touching him on the shoulder]. You shall have your own way in everything and I will pay the five hundred thousand dollar fine! [Aside.] Although it is a waste of good money—by George—!

KITTY [Nestling up to Callman]. He has been telling me the wonderful story of his life and it has touched me more than I can say.

CALLMAN [Caressing Henry]. My boy, my darling son, I refrain from approaching the subject while you are still weak, but feel that there must be many things you remember which occurred at the time you lost your mother. [His eyes resting on Henry.]

HENRY. Many realities of my daily life which I have faced then and since will seem stranger than fiction, but none of them so strange as our eventful meeting of identification.

CALLMAN. True, I have searched everywhere and employed agents for years . . . God's ways are indeed wonderful.

KITTY [Eyeing Springmeyer, full of meaning]! Yes, His ways through the beneficial influence of "The Compromising Photo." . . .

[Nestling up to Henry, Callman's arms on their shoulders from behind, Springmeyer, from a respectful distance, contemplating them jealously, as the curtain falls! . . .



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